The Beat Within // Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside // Volume 11.17

As much as we wanted to find a guest writer for this week's editorial note, we have been way too busy, so you snooze you lose, and here we are stepping up, no choice, to share a few bars with you all this week!

How is everyone? Here we are on the eve of possibly one of greatest baseball players ever, Barry Bonds, tying and passing Babe Ruth for second on the all time home run list, 714 to tie, and 715 to pass, with only Hammerin' Hank Aaron to catch. Amazing. What an accomplishment to say the least.

It seems like yesterday, thirty-two years ago, this editor was over his grandparents house in North Beach watching Monday night baseball on NBC television, when Hank Aaron took a high fastball delivered by dreaded Los Angles Dodger pitcher Al Downing and launched it 385 feet into the bleachers to passed Babe Ruth, way back in the Spring of 1974. How many of you remember when Hank was circling the bases, his head was down and out of nowhere two young men came running out onto the field to pat his back? Wow. We never tire seeing that very special homerun footage. Where were you? Were you born? And here we are tonight when Bonds and the Giants face Dusty Baker's Chicago Cubs. Did you know that Dusty Baker was in the lineup for the Atlanta Braves the night Aaron passed Ruth? And tonight or sometime in this series Baker will probably see Bonds pass Aaron as well. Pretty cool.

It's definitely a warm yet breezy Spring day out in the streets of San Francisco, although we are holed up in the office the next couple of days to get this publication you are holding in your hands right now, complete.

We want to take a few minutes to thank the writers of those hundreds and hundreds of letters, and we are not exaggerating, that we have received these past few months from our loyal friends from all over the country. We so wish we could take the time to personally write each and every one of you back, but that will never be the case, sorry. If we have sent you a Beat publication take that as a sign of thanks and great respect for you the writer taking the time to write us and to put that .39 cent stamp on that letter and send it our way. We're touched. Keep writing and keep nagging us for Beats!

You know, once upon a time we were a very capable outfit that could attempt to write back every single entry/letter we received, but we'll tell you, as most of you know, things at Beat headquarters has definitely changed. We truly believe the writing would be on a whole other level if we could personally write you all back. We know the importance of a personal letter, but that won't happen any time soon. We can barely get the two Beat issues out on time each and every week. Again, we thank you writers of letters and pieces for believing in us, as writers in the hall and writers from beyond, if we know you or don't know you, we truly thank you for extending your thoughts and trust to The Beat Within.

So, what's going on in our world? Well, plenty of our favorite writers are finding their way back into the hall after they have left us, they're right back, detained on a probation violation or a new case. Too, too many continue to get sent off to CYA or prison. Some have received major breaks, plus many are seeing beyond the game on the streets and are getting out of the life, which is extremely good. Plus, they have the courage to write about it! While others feel like they are in it 'till death or prison. Well young thugs, the time to wake up is when you are ready and we do hope many of you see the light before you realize it when there is no more of a way out to regain your ultimate freedom 'cause you now have a life sentence.

Before we jump to the topics at hand, allow us to stress to you Beat editorial note readers to help us get the word out about The Beat Within to anyone who is clueless. We want the world to know about what you know! We believe you writers are some of the best teachers out there. No criminal justice expert, no system worker, or professional journalist could tell a better story about what you all have endured are enduring than you! You writers of The Beat Within tell us every week what is missing in your communities, in your life and in the system. If the powers that be really wants to know the truth, see beyond the alleged charges you are carrying, the paperwork/jacket that follows you, this is the way to go, through The Beat Within, but instead one who needs to read this is either too busy or feels, that all The Beat Within is, is a way for gangs/thugs to communicate, and oh are those folks of the latter so wrong in that!

Just recently we were told about such a person who felt that way about The Beat, after having allowed us to visit his juvenile hall unit to speak about The Beat Within. As for that system person(s) that do/does not like The Beat, boy would we like to sit down with them! Sure we can see how what some young people write or say at The Beat Within could be uncomfortable for some, yet one needs to read in between the lines of what one is saying/writing. One needs to see where these young people come from. What they are struggling with and coming to terms with. It is not easy being incarcerated as most of you know. There are plenty of masks one must wear. There is a lot of fear and distrust There is a need to blow oneself up due to rules and politics placed on them by the system and their peers.

If any system person does not like our program to begin with, they don't know us well enough, and obviously are quick to judge our priceless book by it's cover. Well, shame on them, ha! We always get bummed out when we hear that one thinks there is too much gang/thug communication in The Beat. Please! Because a young writer says he/she's a gang member? 'Cause a young writer is struggling with figuring out who he really is, where he fits in, in a world that hasn't been too nice to him? Because this is all he/she knows at this time in his/her young life? We know we are rambling to the faithful in our program, sorry. It just gets us so frustrated. The Beat is deep. The Beat is as honest as we can be, yes indeed we are going on 11 years strong as a weekly! Eleven years! This is no fluke. Our critics need to go deeper than seeing things as gang communication. Look at The Beat responses to every single piece! We're not dealing with straight A, college bound, students here, although we think many can be on that road. You'll never see in The Beat kids doing blatant shout outs, calling of sets, blocks, colors, direct hating, please. If there is something one does not like, call us up, lets talk about, point it out to us. We too are students. We do not claim to be experts. We make mistakes too. We want to work with every single one of you, be it our writers, a community worker, or a system worker.

OK, lets get to the topics that our writers addressed as a class prior to the writing that is showcased in this fabulous 11.17 issue is, "Are you playing the game, or is the game playing you?" —We're trying to figure out if you are you playing the Game of Life or if the Game of Life is getting the best of you. Are you the player behind the moves, or just a piece on the board being moved by others? Do you have any control over the rules of the game, or are you forced to accept rules put down by someone else? What lets you be in control of you own game, and what makes you lose control of it? If you are in control of your game, how do you define winning? Can you win your game? How?

Our second topic, "How are you locked up when you aren't here?" — It's easy to think of freedom as just the opposite of lock-up. Anyone who has ever been in the hall, in the Y, in jail, in prison, or just locked in your own bedroom, wants out, wants to be free. But can you be locked-up in ways that have nothing to do with four walls? Can you be locked up when there are no counselors or guards telling you what to do? Can you be on the outs, free to make all your own decisions, but still be locked up? Do you know people on the outs who are imprisoned by their own thinking, their own behavior, their own loyalties, their own affiliations, their own addictions, their own families or their own histories? What the Beat wants to know is what keeps you locked up even when you are no longer in the hall?

Last but not least, "How are you feeling...?"

All right, we know there are a few of you out there looking to share your story and skills in our latest editorial note writing contest. There is still time too! Allow us once again to reintroduce our latest editorial note writing contest, which as we stated last week will be continued/open through the month of May, given our mailing has been very sporadic. Forgive us. The topic remains, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like we said, this contest is open to all Beat writers. All submissions need to be in by the end of May, 2006. We will always honor pieces that come in up to a week late. The First-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each. Best of luck writers, in telling us your written story/poem that relates to turning back the hands of time.

Before we call it an editorial note, lets congratulate our latest POW winners! They are . . .Ellwood from Marin, Hyphy from Walden House, Christina and Marchus from Arizona, Meen, Kalaaan, Lil'Roach, Mighty Mouse, Walter all from SF/YGC, and from the 150 Crew we have two from Lil' Mainy Princess, Chocolate Baby, two from Lil' Toot, David & Buddy, and Lil' Jt.

This magnificent issue goes out to the every single writer in unit C in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 Crew. C-Unit has been truly feeling The Beat Within in recent weeks so allow us to send this issue out to the boys and the staff of C-Unit for feeling The Beat Within. We 're feeling you too. Thanks!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co–founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Allan Martinez

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Joanna Lin, Allan Tinker, David Muhammad, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Mervyn Wool, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Danielle Moore, Linette Kim, Roy Hodgson, Eric Strenger, Sneezie, Danielle Worthy, Elliott McGregor, Brittany Bernard, Jenelle Janger, Rachel Pettus, Brahmani Houston, Hanif Bey, Carolyn Goosen, Erika Downs, Perry Jones, Will Roy, Zoe Torres, Catalina Hayes-Bautista.

Special Beat Facilitators: Laura Thornton

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecewski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within greatefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaft Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidence Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

www.thebeatwithin.org

Editor's Note 2
Pieces of the Week 4
Co-Pieces of the Week 10
Standouts 14
Weekly Writings 26
Voices in Spanish 40
The Beat Without 41

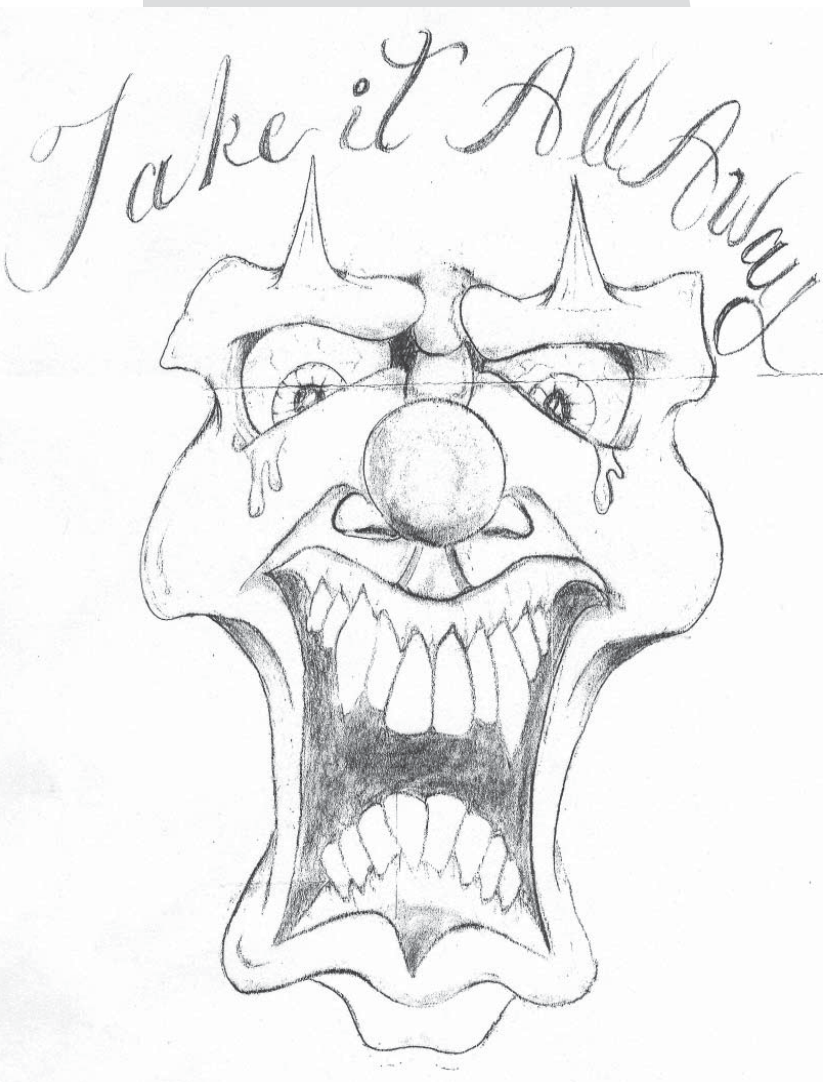


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Hollywood

I always thought my feeling for you has changed
But when I saw you,
I didn't feel the same
All these memories came back
It was always me and you
Forever stay true
I gave my all to you,
But I was foolish not to see
You didn't give a damn about me
You told me you loved me
You told me you cared
You stated: "Baby, I'll always be there"
And I believed
And it was our baby that we conceived
And in the long run
I found out you're a childish lil' boy
Treatin' girls like they some toys
To think I was gonna have your baby
Made me feel sick
Thinking of all those days you called me
A dirty trick
In the long run,
I was sad, depressed, mad
Killed a baby I almost had
Because of the decisions I make
All those great opportunities, I didn't take
But now I know I don't need you
So you can play me for a fool
I say, "I do,"
But now I wanna say, "Forget you"
For all the scandalous things you've done
'Cause in the long run
I won
'Cause I got my life together
And me and you will never be together
Ever
See, I'm making my life better
Whether you like it or not
'Cause I'm better without you
And I hope you see it, too
I can't stand you
And in the long run
You end up the "fool."

-Hyphy, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We feel like giving you an award for seeing how much more valuable your life is than the empty words of love some boyfriend told you to get what he wanted. This is a lesson that should serve you well all your life. You are so right: you are definitely the winner, and he is definitely the fool!

All I need is a chance. Success is how you use what you've been taught. Get your head out of the sand and into the game.

The Game Of Life: A Metaphor

Sometimes for me it seems like I don't even get to play the game. Life is like a football game that for some reason or another I never get to play. There are too many better players, or I'm too small, or I don't completely understand the game. Everyone has a little more negativity to contribute.

And so it seems like I sit on the bench and just keep my uniform clean, watching the players on the field be heroes, wishing I could be a hero. But the cosmic coach has so far seen it fit to ordain me to be an insignificant part of a much larger organization.

But I'm hungry and I'm lean, and I watch the players, the infallible titans, and wait, hope, for an injury. The slightest stumble could be my opportunity to sweet up my helmet and enter the free-for-all.

Then, even if only for a moment, I might get to stand under the lights and have it all come down to me. Then I'll take the kick…

All I need is a chance.

Success is how you use what you've been taught. Get your head out of the sand and into the game.

-Ellwood, Marin

From The Beat: Why do you suppose you are not playing the game of life? Seems like to us you are, with this outstanding well written piece you deliver this week! You score big time. Use The Beat as your chance to show off your skills! Thousands are reading and waiting word from you! Once you get released put your words into action and truly play the game that's going to allow you to succeed. Capture your dream, show no fear when it comes to staying out of juvenile, returning to school, and simply doing right!!

I always looked at the stars as diamonds And the moon as one big pear

A Young Man's Fate

Some day skies will fade away
With blank faces and dry tears
Which may
Start some new world.
I always looked at the stars as diamonds
And the moon as one big pearl
Standing to live as an example.
So I write for legacy given history a big sample.
What's the use to be hopeful
When only dreams appear to be thoughtful
And open eyes become something painful?
Living is hard in a world full of hate.
I'm 17 with 25 credits - can't even graduate
In a state where education is fake.
Not learning the basics in life 'cause I spent much of
My teenage years making mistakes.
But I live to die.
Damn I wish y'all could see my face
So you could see these eyes of a young man's fate.

-Lil' Mainly Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You truly have a unique style that lets us know this is your work, even without seeing your name. The first stanzas in this poem are wrapped in beauty – the soft tone and great analogies make us feel like we are walking on air. But then you take us deeper, into a darker place filled with hopelessness. We know that sometimes poems can express one of many emotions we are feeling so we hope this is the case because there is a reason why you are here and it is not to die. Life has been really hard up until this point and to be honest, there is no guarantee that it will ever be easy. But that doesn't mean you can't be happy, and you will never know until you start thinking of this life as a gift as opposed to punishment.

Ask Yourself...

To all of y'all locked up, I'd just like to take time today to tell y'all why being locked up can be helpful. A lot of y'all think the longer you locked up, the harder you is because it means you've done crucial hardcore things that no one's capable of. To tell you the truth, we heard some pretty rough stories about how y'all got locked up and it's probably true. You think it's coo' to get caught slippin', 'cause that's all it really is.

Imagine if the police was one of your enemies. Then what? You'd be dead as hell right now depending on what you did. Got caught with a gun? Fighting? Robbing someone? Sellin' your shhh? Well imagine that person you fought or robbed? Imagine if the cops was that person's homeboy. I mean seriously, just sit there and imagine what would've happened if cops were just another gang and they got you with handcuffs on.

Well what would you do to one of your enemies if they got caught slippin' that bad? I mean, shhh, are you even all that hard to begin with? Why are you so hard? Or what made you so hard? Why is actin' hard so important to you? Do you consider yourself acting or is that how you really is? Why are you acting or why are you like that? Do you want to be like that? Why?

Well these are some of the many questions you should ask yourself. Society sees us as ignorant people that will continue to do wrong and will never change and that we stupid and reckless and blah blah blah with all that bullshhh they say. Are you that? If you still goin' to continue being yourself and hard, then at least get smart and intelligent.

Well yeah, I gotta go 'cause staff talking about us to go. I don't like it. Well this was Meen who is always into something.

-Meen B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is truly a fine piece of writing. You have asked the kind of questions The Beat likes to ask in the topics we present. And you have posed questions that must make people think ("Why are you so hard? Why is actin' hard so important to you?") Do you find that you are looking at life differently than you used to? Are you analyzing things differently than you used to? Are you planning for your future differently than you used to? In what ways?

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry for the things I've done
And all the battles I said I won
I really hope you forgive me
Because my heart is locked
And only you have the key

I'm sorry for each hurtful thing I say
I know your are too, It's okay
Because I need you and I love you
There is nothing in this world I wouldn't do for you

I'm sorry for each tear I made fall I'm sorry for it all
Maybe one day Ill be perfect again but will you still love me until then?
Will you be there for me when I cry?
Will you support me when I try?
These questions might always remain and still cause tear drops to fall down like rain
I'm sorry I love you

-Christina, Durango, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Christina, You are great at expressing yourself. It sounds like you are asking for forgiveness for a wrong choice you made. Please understand that no one is perfect. We can forgive and move on and learn to make positive choices but this person that you love needs to love you back for who you are. You are young and your heart will be broken at times but eventually you will meet someone who thinks you are awesome the way you are.

A Misunderstood Eccentric And A Ghetto Intellectual

A big turning point in my life was when I was incarcerated. When I was locked up for the first time, I was taught some lessons that sometimes need to be taught through experience (learning the hard way). This is how I look at it: there's a circle; within this circle there is God and myself. Everyone outside this circle is to perceive the reason that I'm in jail is rape — which I didn't do.

God was teaching me by having me overcome different obstacles. Every obstacle I overcame I learned something. I learned to not be so impulsive, to be the bigger man, to think before you act to an extent. I felt that until God felt that I had completely interpreted and comprehended everything that he intended for me to learn to keep myself out of places like YGC, that I was to remain locked up.

Now while you're locked up and thinking about going home, you don't think about how everything's still the same. Sure you've improved as a person, but has the environment that shaped you into that negative being — has it changed? You go back home and bad goes to worse. Your temperament is controlled but disturbed. You walk around feeling angry and depressed, but you don't want to feel this way! But it hurts you that you do, so you unintentionally lash out at people for agitating you. No one wants to walk around looking angry and depressed, so you throw on a fake smile and you laugh. No one suspects the angst that you're feeling, so you set a false impression of yourself upon your peers because you're afraid to let them or just people know the real you, the person who exists beneath the surface of all the laughing and playing around.

You want them to know the 'misunderstood eccentric' and the 'ghetto intellectual' you are; that's my own personal metaphor for saying that I believe in having a 4.0 GPA and sagging and not backing down from anyone. Basically I'm an athlete and a scholar, a rare combination in people. I like Bay Area rap and I also enjoy science and classical music and contact sports... I'm a thug and a geek. I'm learning it's difficult to be both but I'm learning to balance those different characteristics...

Now the reason for me being here now is that I made a bad decision that has put a lot at risk for me. This time I'm learning to really think before I act to the furthest extent that a person can. I'm also learning about making decisions and taking opportunity. Now I could've made a decision that could've cost me my life, but instead I took the opportunity that would allow me to go on and succeed in it.

I still have difficult choices that await me, and in the end results will be my failure or my success — but they both have the potential to pull me down or bring me up. Well, I have to go now because I don't have enough time to allow you all to grasp who I am or what I'm trying to accomplish, but I hope you got something out of this and hopefully there will be more of this to come.

Shout out to the Bay Area! Shout outs to all in support of me — my mom, brothers, and sisters, aunties, uncles, and my dad.

-Kalann B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a fine piece of writing this is, Kalann. What this shows is that human beings are not so easily labeled. You are a complicated, multi-faceted individual, and we are impressed with your versatility. Do people give you a hard time for liking both Bay Area rap and classical music? That's a stark contrast. (And what particular classical music is your favorite?) At what times are you a thug, and at what times are you a geek? We think you have a fine mind whether you're a geek or a thug right now, but we can't help but worry that by acting the thug, you put a lot at risk, beginning with your freedom and ending with...

Gangs And Violence

Gangs and violence leads to death
People getting hit with hot lead
Leaving people with things unsaid
People sacrifice things just to have their blood shed
But it's something that gang members can't get in their heads
Having to watch their backs before they go to bed
Black on black; blue on red
That's basically all it is
The races that were once slaves, fought to be free, instead turned to this
In the halls or in the pen, it's mostly Black and Brown
In the streets or in jail, we see violence all around
From what I see, there will never be peace
Even if everyone prayed and got down on their knees
Why people get in gangs? No one will know
Only the person who got in it, but they won't show
I've lost three homies to gang violence
And hope they will lead me the guidance
There is even beef between cities
San Francisco, Oakland and LA, they're all enemies
Being here had made me think
I've learned to put that on paper with lead or ink
The world is not a joke,
Millions of kids will join gangs and violence have proved that point
These four walls have kept me
Away from gangs and violence,
But one day I'll be back out there
Just hope I won't be the next one dying

-Lil Roach B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very hard-hitting poem both about the serious state of our inner cities, the gang violence that threatens so many, and the responsibility that those in the gangs have for their own situation. Our biggest concern with what you've written is your fear about what waits for you out there, and how you're safe because you're locked up. We definitely share your hope that you can escape such dangers, but you can't rely on these walls to keep you safe. You have to find a way to live out there without being a part of the dirt. Are you able to? How?

A Dream: To My Nephew, Rafael

I called out your name
So you turned to face my way
Once you did that
All my anger hurt and hate faded away
Once I heard you laugh
I stood still in a daze
As I watched you smile while running to me with open arms
When you finally reached me you gave me a hug
I grabbed you and carried you in my arms
You laughed and smiled while you held my face kissing it
I put you down and you took off runnin' and I followed behind you
I played with you chasing you all over the place,
Not caring of our surroundings, or if I got tired
But as fast as the feeling of joy that you gave me left without warning
When you disappeared and once again
I found myself with the feeling of anger, hurt, and hate
When I woke up to four walls, a door, and a screen.

-Mighty Mouse B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've illustrated how dreams can make you feel both good and bad when you're locked up. Do you dream of your nephew often? Is he gone from the world, or only from your life while you're locked up? Do you think your dreams mean something? Are they visions of the future — or warnings? Great piece...

My Untitled Poem

Sittin' in class
A lot of kids wishin' they had that glass
A lot of people reading and writing just to pass that time
I'm sittin' in my cell
Tryin' to think of a rhyme
I'm the one out of a million wishin' they didn't do that crime
Always in the wrong place at the wrong time
All my art is what's going to save me
Listening to my family who crave me
The judge won't even release me
It feels like they're tryin' to decrease me
I'm walking blind, waiting to be found
It feels like I'm stuck and can't get off the ground
I'm thinkin' about college and how I'm gonna get in
But I'm still sittin' in my cell writing to The Beat Within
Now I'm in a place where I can only see my mom twice a week
It's even harder seein' my mom cry and weep
I think this place is getting to my head
It's even harder when most of my family is dead
But I'll just keep doin' what I gotta do
Ain't nobody ever gonna know what I go through

-Marcus, SEF/Maricopa County

From The Beat: Being locked up in jail or detention is a tough and unpleasant thing. Writing and drawing are two very powerful tools that you can use to release your feelings of anger, sadness, hatred, loneliness, and regret. This skillfully written poem shows that. While you are locked up and doing your time, try writing out or even drawing your thoughts and feelings about things that are going on in your life. There is no right or wrong way of doing it – just do it! You may be quite surprised as to what you create!

A Feeling Only A Real Girl Could Feel

I wish I could let her see how far we could go.
So sexy, damn she's smart and beautiful.
Reasons I speak to you so soft is because I'm weak around your soul.
Now I'm gonna lift your chin up,
Show you these eyes
Of mine have a mirror,
Seeing yourself and dreams of
Us together on some romantic thing
With me sticky on your heart like syrup.
Seeing your body language pick and choose
Not knowing if being rough or just take it smooth
I decide to be just myself.
Instead of doing something I wouldn't do
Standing souls understand each other's journeys quest.
Only faithfulness, trust, honesty and faith
Make love only the best.
Damn if only one girl could understand that
I could clean up a hurtful heart's mess.
But yet I still write about someone unknown.
Letting that person who understands,
Know what's in my chest.

-Lil' Mainly Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow this is beautiful – you are developing a very unique writing style that is breezy and light. There are times when we just start writing and the words just pour out, leaving us to wonder, "Will anyone understand this?" We don't know if this was one of those times or something you had been working on for a while but your poetry is growing. Reading it feels like going through a maze because we never know where we are going to be taken next but we know we want to make our way through. We know that love is one of your favorite themes and we know that finding love is important at any age but we want to encourage you to take things slow. Don't worry about finding love because it will find you when the time is right. When we start looking too hard, we start looking in the wrong places.

To Be Free (Juvenile Hall)

In Juvenile Hall
I need to get one thing straight
Why minors constantly state
Who they hate,
But when they gotta go up
They break
Then you got dudes
Who be on all the juvy girl
I mean, can't you go on the outs
And find a real girl?
You not gon' get none
In the Juvy Hall World
Thinkin' of some so good
It makes yo' toes curl
It's time to come from yo' fantasy
Don't get at me
'Cause you can't handle me
I'm a boss
You see
You never say please
To make you get on ya' knees
And hella intelligent
With straight A's no B's
Don't ask for what I want
But I get what I need
All the many reasons to cry
And to die
And so many questions
Why the world lies
You'll never understand
Until you demand
Education
Instead of relaxation
It's a sensation to breathe
You'll be relieved
The day you leave
Just because you'll be free
But the oxygen comes from God
To those beautiful green trees
You have to trust and believe
Pray for more deceit
Listen to the harmony
And earn the key
To the heart of the free
So what you gon' do
When you get a release?
I know how it feels to be free
But life is not a guarantee
We all want to see
Who will grow up to be
Shedding too many tears
Growing up facing fears
For sixteen years
Baby daddy sitin' around
Drunk off hella beers
To my mind
These are lyrics
And I can careless if you hear it
I turned sixteen in here
And I'm sincere
My future's at stake
To be grown
I'm near
That age where I can't be locked up
In a County cage
My talent I will show
And God I will praise
I be in bad moods
But I can bounce back any day
These bars are only temporary
If you believe it
Go pray on the sanctuary
If you don't quite get it
Go to the library
And look it up in the dictionary
Or perhaps you'll comprehend
With a game of Pictionary
See, some of you don't have no damn brains
All y'all worry about is the money
Cars
Girls
And fame
This is a game
That carries yo' name
And you leave ya' lives
To hang
Claimin' at once
Hella different gangs
Puttin' your all into what you bang
Sometimes I wanna scream
But I continue to work
With my team
No matter how bossy it may seem
I'm tired of these blue pants and pink tees
I just want to go back to me
Without the streets
And live my life to be free.

-Chocolate Baby, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Another excellent piece from Chocolate Baby. Chocolate Baby, you must learn to control your temper. We know that you are fed up – that's good. But, focus your anger into something productive. Don't let it guide you towards making bad decisions. What do you mean, going back to you? Tell us about who you are, in a different context, away from the streets. Where do you see yourself in ten years?*

My Life

My mom didn't visit like she promised
I couldn't hold in my tears; they came out like vomit
My dad stopped calling, after he said he would
I made myself run, and do drugs to hurt the 'rents
Because I could
Little do they know, they hurt me more
Than they thought
Because they yell at me and hate me
For everything I'm not
And I'm not that much, when you think it out
And for that, I cry silently, and laugh out loud
I laugh at them, their silly mistakes
Or I want to laugh, but I hold it in 'til I break
Break into tears, sad, and silently alone
Trying to be better
Too bad I'm stubborn as a stone

-Heather, Marin

***From The Beat:** When you're disappointed in and angry at your 'rents (parents) if you sabotage yourself by taking drugs or in any other way, you're somehow taking their side in saying you're unworthy, which totally isn't true. Is not true. You don't write what impressions your parents have given you regarding what they want you to be or for you to accomplish. While you have some time to think about things, why don't you figure out what is best for you? What must you address? Is it drugs? Can you are you ready to change? You're already on your own in many profound ways, so can you get on your own side, continue to be who you are, and develop a life that will help you be happy, one that you're proud of? We hope so. We're with you!*

I'm Out Of The Game!

Me, I'm out the game for real now. I took too many losses. I have been in the game for a while and have nothing to show for it. I lost several love ones to this thing y'all call the game. To some people this isn't a game, it's life. It's a way people live.

I'm out of the game because you can't trust every ninja and because I'm going to try to do things the legal way. I hated spending money to make money. I'm out of it because all the OG's I seen that been in the game since the 80's ain't got nothing to show.

My dad always told me the game ain't the same as it used to be. He also tells me all the people he came up with are dead or in jail or on dope. I also see it from my own eyes. It's really not the same anymore cause ninjas be funkin' over little ass petty shhh. It ain't worth it. I think every night in my cell about the outside and the streets but I know for a fact it's still the same and ain't nothing changed.

I used to have dreads but I cut them. Them dreads is a target on my momma. They attract too much attention on the real. I got two little sisters and a brother that look up to me. And I got to out live my mother. Man, I don't see no way at in that life that why I think twice. And I think about my future because I want to have a bright one I don't want to be living to die. I don't want to be remembered on no T-shirt I rather be remembered as man who made something of his self and have a positive impact on everyone who knew me.

-Lil' Toot, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** Life can sometimes feel like a game but there are no do-overs and no restarts – when it's over, it's over. If the same path brings people the to the same places – jail, addiction, coffin – then obviously that is not the path to take. It takes real maturity for you to see through all the bs and have a stronger sense of what's really important. The game has evolved like the rest of our society at a pretty quick pace – there is a viciousness that did not exist back in the day. Everybody is quick to let anger turn into action, without giving enough thought as to is this worth it? Is this something I should be doing? It's great to that you are willing to do what it takes, including cutting your dreads, to stay out of trouble and stay with your family. Just remember no matter how tough it gets, you can do this.*

God Forgive Me

God forgive me for I know I've committed a lot of sins in the past.
Forgive me for all the weed and peels and crack I sold.
Forgive me for not doing what I was told.
Forgive me for the people I have hurt physically and mentally.
I know you watch everything and I can't hide anything from you.
Every night I'm on my knees confessing the truth.
When you sent me to juvenile hall I knew it was only salvation.
Forgive me Lord for everytime I loaded up that gun.
Forgive me for all the times I squeezed that trigger.
Forgive me for not setting a good example for my sisters
And not being a positive figure.
Forgive me for talking and thinking blasphemy.
From now and on I will repent.
Forgive me for letting my lack of knowledge keep you away from me as a defense.
Forgive me for not pushing myself to higher levels.
Forgive me for talking about others and making fun of those with problems they can't help.
Forgive me for trying to take other people's lives
Forgive me for all the girls' feelings I hurt and put down.
I thank you God for helping me get out of a lot of death Situations.
I thank you for all of that;
All of the times roaming the streets I know you were the one who truly had my back.
I thank you for letting me wake up to see another day.
From now and on I give myself to you,
I want to be your child.
From now and on I'm going to stop living wild.
I don't want to live by the gun and die by the gun
I don't want to spend money to make money.
I don't want to be stuck paying child support.
I don't want to be feelin nervous ridin' dirty everyday.
I don't want my heart to drop when I see
That solid all black car with three or four police in it.
Most of all I don't want my future kids in
This type of environment
Or my two little sisters who are my heart.
So God please forgive my past and
Pave the way for my future that awaits me.

-Lil' Toots, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** This is one of those pieces that you know came from the deepest crevices of the writer's soul. You pulled out all the stops and let your emotions just pour onto the page – it is amazing and inspiring. Confessionals in church are not just about repenting because they are also very therapeutic. Since this pieces theme was confessions we hope that talking about all the bad things you have done lift a little bit the burden of the guilt. Now from what you've laid out, you were no angel, and maybe we didn't do the same things as you but we ALL make me mistakes that we later regret and would do anything to take back. But do not spend too much time dwelling on what you cannot change – the past – and focus on your future. You have found something to help give you the support and encouragement through the tough times – lean on your faith. Don't give up. Don't forget who you are and all that you have to be proud of, like this beautiful piece of writing. Keep your head up.*

I don't want my future kids in
This type of environment
Or my two little sisters
who are my heart.

Alone In A Dark Cell

Just sitting here with deep thoughts running through my mind,
Now knowing I have to take it one day at a time.
Forgotten memories run through my head
As I lie on this fake bed.
Reminiscing about all the good times and bad times,
So quiet you can hear your heart beat.
Disconnected from the outside
It's like your time is frozen inside this box.
While the world and its time is still going
Feels like I'm isolated from what I love.
It's like I'm restrained from time
All because of a dramatic crime.
Never had so much time to think
Can't sleep because my eyes won't close
Can't rest because the feeling of stress.
It's all a test.
They know who will be back.
Alone in a dark cell.
I ask myself questions
But I have no answer for them.
So I ask the creator of everything that exists
Give me a sign.
Which way do I go?
Help me get through this,
Take care of my family,
Pave the way of a successful future for me.
I'm at a stage of my life where I need to make a decision
The purple, pills and money have messed up my vision.
Alone in a dark cell
Sealed in a cube
Stuck in four corners
Stripped of everything I miss.
Why do I have to see in order for it to come like this?
In order for one to be
You must have the other sad to see
Alone in a dark cell
What else can I tell?

-Ford, 150 Crew

***From The Beat:** You used a lot of powerful metaphors in this piece, ones that make the reader feel like they are in their own dark cell. While jail offers up the opportunity to think and reflect on life, it also makes it impossible to get your mind off your mind, which can be key when there is so much going on in your head. But you are using your time wisely because now is the time to do some serious thinking. Getting away from the purp, the pills and everything else affords you an opportunity you might not have otherwise gotten. So don't waste it.*

Same Actions

I think that a way of being locked up without being in jail is keep doing the same actions that got you locked up in the first place.

If you are scared to take different paths that can take you to different places in life that is a way of being locked up. Not wanting to be a whole different person knowing you got all the opportunities in the world to change your life is a way of being locked up.

-Walter B4, SF/YGC

***From The Beat:** We love how you put this down, Walter, but it raises a question in our minds: Are you locked up in the ways you describe? If so, what do you need to do to free yourself from the sort of "lock-up" that comes from the fear you describe? If you aren't shackled by these kind of fears of change, then what changes do you see happening in your life?*

Close Encounter

Imagine World War III with your next-door neighbor.
We use a gun but then we're scared to fight with pencil and paper.
This world is over; the cold is getting close to the end.
But I'm gonna make it, with patience until I pull in a win.

You gotta face it, it's our own man we fighting against.
This segregation and probation got me hoppin the fence.
The swat team gonna make it hard to stay in the streets.
A block dream got me rollin dice and playing for keeps.
A rock fiend could lose his life as quick as the next.
He's drippin with sweat now how could Jesus slip and forget?
To spare his life the player price
Has got me askin the Lord
It's lose or win, I'm losing men they cruisin fast as a Porsche.
This chess game has got me making moves as big as a king
Was givin the ring.
I guess it's not as big as it seems.
A close encounter got me taking breaths and skippin a beat.
Your lips and your teeth will speak
But if you listen I teach.
And I believe that if we stand up we gonna make it in time.
A winner always wants the ball when the game's on the line.

Imagine World War III with your next-door neighbor.
We use a gun but then we're scared to fight with pencil and paper.
This world is over; the cold is getting close to the end.
But I'm gonna make it with patience 'till I pull in a win.

You'll never break it your getting played by ya friend.
And could you take it, yo' patna that was there 'till the end?
But he was fakin you thought he was cool but was mistaken.
Now he hatin' 'cause he's living in the hands of a Satan,
Where peaceful nights keep on lightin' like the burn of the torch.
Another ninja gone, another mother cry on the porch.
Can I succeed in the ghetto when the chaos hits?
And when they get to sprayin' dog I thank God that he missed.
I clench my fist and get to steppin' through the turf of the fiends.
I've seen so many ninjas die it's like a daily routine.
Broke teens ain't got no parents and they follow they steps.
Locked in the streets without a choke chain strapped to his neck.
He strapped with a tec; he busting thinking what to do now
The same ninja was his patna 'till he threw in the towel.
A close encounter getting closer 'till it ends in a death
But I'm gonna make it till it take it to the end of my breath.

-David and Buddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Jacob and Evans sounds like it could be a great songwriting team, like the great songwriting team of Lennon and McCartney, although in this issue we have to keep it to first names only. We thank you for not only writing the piece but for performing it to the group. Powerful stuff! Yet we don't know how many times we can say it but we'll say it, you guys are good! Always keeping it real but still infusing a positive message into the mix. We especially love the line, "But I'm gonna make it, with patience until I pull in a win" cause life is truly a game of patience. We guess that's why it's so hard when we are young because we have no patience. It's haunting though the way lyrics about death, drugs and betrayal just bounce around the piece with a sort of casualness; we know that a lot of young men and women in the halls are used to losing loved ones but we wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that most people are not living like this. Most people haven't been to more funerals than they can count; most people haven't spent more time on the block than they have in school; and most people when they walk out of their house don't have to look over their shoulder. We know it's hard out there but we think you deserve better. We think you too deserve a life that brings you a little peace in this world. And we don't want to hear, "That's just not how it is out here," or "That's not the way it goes, nothing you can do," cause it's a cop out, it's an excuse to not try harder. With the talent we have seen in pieces like this and your performances we know you can do anything, with a little bit of faith and a lot of hard work.

Pain Equals Tears

things are always on my mind
i feel lonely and sad some of the time
in my head i say forget the game
robbing and killing —
it's always the same old thang
every day pain in my eyes is what i see
but i can't let the devil take control of me
three hundred and sixty-five days a year
dying is what i fear
seeing my family crying tears
because i'm in heaven and not here
i'm crying — i'm hurt — can't you see
why can't nobody hear me
in my mind i'm trying to get these memories off
but my soul seems to be lost
you don't know my situation
my mind in my body is always racing
— i'm in pain
on my pillow i cry tears like rain
because every day i feel the same
why am i always in so much in emotion
that my mind in my body seems to be coastin'
but in slow motion
why am i always so lonely
grandma why did you die
i needed you to hold me
to my heart you hold the key
open it so i can stop feeling ruefully
so i can stop these tears from flowin' you see
i just want to see what life brings
i want to see it to my surprising
but how can i stop this loneliness inside
and stop myself from crying

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We've said it before, how the grandmother that you adore has merely changed form — she still wants to see you keep away from harm. Yes, it hurts to lose those we love and trust, but to honor their spirit remains a must. And how can we honor the dead? By living the life they wanted for us instead of caving in to hopelessness. Fill your life with industriousness and positive events. Honor you grandma by the love you show your innocent daughter — show her what your grandma taught ya.

Hard To Believe

I want to believe
That love is strong enough
To keep someone
From being incarcerated

I want to believe
That a childhood
Should be filled
With good memories

I want to believe
That a gangster's girl
Is somebody
I don't need

I want to believe
My family
Is all right
Without me

But it's hard to believe
In these things
Because the streets want me to believe
That these things don't exist

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Great poem, Neezy. All these things you mention can and do exist. You never refer to your own childhood in your writings, but you seem to have a trust and find a joy in life that gives the impression you're basically a happy, if a very serious person, as if you had a happy childhood. If you didn't, when you have your own family, what will you do to create a fun, loving, secure childhood for your own kids? Can a young woman's love be strong enough to keep you out of the streets and out of juvy? Could you love a woman so profoundly that she would have the courage to change her life to stay free? You only allude to your life on the outs, Neezy. What is it really like?

Love Myself

In a world with no guidance
When I'm locked inside of myself
There's no hidin'
Don't wanna face the facts
That means facing me
But I know I'm gonna look in the mirror
And who do I see?
There's a face, eyes, nose, and mouth
But who is this person?
I still can't figure it out
I'm staring at her staring at me
Our eyes are locked
But she doesn't say nothin'
So I blink twice and now I see somethin'
A beautiful girl with a lovely smile
I think we connected for a long while
I think I know her
And I think she knows me
In a world with no guidance
Now I see
I know this girl
I know myself
I love this girl
That means I love myself.

-Lareesia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Beautiful piece. How well do you know yourself? You recognize your face, but what about your inner-self? Get to know yourself. That's where you will find you guidance. Learn what's right and wrong. The more you know about yourself, the more you'll love yourself.

The Heart Of The Streets!

Trying to exhale, but the wind blowing you back
'Cause once you get in, the game don't give you much slack
Fire power and the hoods around ya
Stand up, shot down. Sneaks creepin' behind ya
Go to the block where you find purple quick
Hit the liquor sto'e then turn around and hit a lick
Quick cheese, heavy pockets
Look up at the sky and see the heart of locket
Candy paint scrapers with the windows tinted up
Drive by hustlin' now them sneaks ready to buck
You love the 'hood, ain't ready to retire from the hood
But once it's too late you gone wish you understood.
Enemies reminiscin' and laughing at the site of your blood
While you closin' eyes. You start to pray to the man above
Tell him to forgive you 'cause the streets is what you love

-Hollywood GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've packed some very meaningful and deep reflections in this tight poem. It lets us know that you know where the fast lane leads — and that waiting too long to make changes in your life can put you in a place where those changes come too late. Do these wise words also apply to you? What will you do differently when you get out of here so that you never have to be locked up again?

Just My Mind

Tears in torment, laughter in pain
I dare you to move to the beat of my game
You're something to me, yet nothing to me
You're helping me, yet doing nothing for me
Honestly, you're bringing me down
To the depths of hell, deep underground
Six feet under in this wretched place
One hundred feet, 'til I see your face
It's not depression, not anxiety, just my mind
Writing things down, like a toy, waiting to unwind
Holding onto the things I treasure
Even though they won't be there forever

-Heather, Marin

From The Beat: What inspired this piece of work/art? If this is a way you truly feel, what are you going to do for you, to get yourself out of this predicament? What's your plan to find happiness? Can you find a common ground to talk to the ones who effect you most?

The Game

When will it be my time to quit the game?
My time has already came.
The game will put you in places.
You will see misunderstood faces.
All people think about is the game.
They do shhh that's a shame.
To people who know u and people who don't know your name.
If and when you ever get in the game,
It will cause the people you love a lot of pain.
So when will I quit the game?
Today, tomorrow, new year, decades?
But the best time is now,
The game is in any town
And any ninja will act a clown.
Think about it - the game will lay you down.
The game I quit
"Cause after everything I started to get sick.
Sometimes you come up in the game quick.
You will even get hit with extended clips
So when will it be your time to quit the game.
I'll never go back 'cause you can get framed -
Drug dealin, killin, robbin, stealin, is all part of the game.
So when will everyone quit the game?

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's interesting because when the game is good, it's really good, right? You are on top of the world and nothing can get in your way. But it's always something – something always happens to bring you down to reality. Nobody gets to play in the game and not pay a price. Oftentimes that price is the life of a loved one or your own; loss of freedom; loss of sanity. We could go on and on but it sounds like you already understand that none of this is worth it. And you are right because there is no time like the present. The longer you wait, the harder it will be and the higher the stakes. Keep following your heart, you are on the right track.

What I've Been Through In Knowing Life

You wanna know what Ally Bo has been through?
If I tell you, what are you gonna do?
I've been through a lot in four years.
Every day I try to hold back tears,
Knowing life is harder than it seem,
Knowing ninjas come at you with the red beam.
I've had five glocks pointed to my head at once
But I'm grateful I'm not dead off them guns.
I've been stabbed in my chest
Even though I had a gun that night and would've shot it
It would've hit the vest.
I've been robbed before
Knowing if I pull this gun out one of us is going through heaven's doors.
So I stayed cool and gave the money up
Because the next day the money came back like what the ---?
Now I've robbed a ninja.
Now I'm locked up and didn't even pull the trigger.
I've been locked up for a month
Not been able to smoke a blunt
But that don't matter
Because the county food got me getting fatter.
Every time something happened to me God was on my side.
'Cause every time a gun was pointed at me and I was shot at I didn't die.
So everyday I get a new meaning of life.
Ever since I was young I wondered what it would be like
Knowing the meaning of life.

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So this is tough for us cause we love the raw energy coming out of this piece. It takes keeping it real to a whole new level. You have been through more than most people can imagine. You have faced death more than most soldiers who are fighting overseas in battle. And we think that you are very lucky. But like most other things, everyone's luck runs out. Will you be out of the game just in time? Or will you end up as just another sad story? We like to believe that everything happens for a reason and there is a reason why you are still here. We also know that reason has nothing to do with running the streets cause you are better than that. Even though we don't know who wrote this piece, it doesn't matter. Cause everybody in that place is better than the stuff they've been doing, which brought them to the halls. There are people all over this planet waiting for their second chance and you have had far more than that. Don't waste it.

every time a gun was pointed at me and I was shot at I didn't die. So everyday I get a new meaning of life.

I Show Love

The love is gone because a lot of people just like to hate on someone else's shine. I don't want no one to have to hate on other people. A lot of people don't have anything and don't know what it takes to get it but I show a lot of love to everyone, even the people I don't like. I say sometimes people like to hate because all they know is hate.

I don't see nothing wrong with showing love. Some people don't like the word love, which is why some people kill people or they attack their girl. It take a lot to hate someone for something like having better shoes than you, but I show love by saying I love your shoes even if some people say his shoes are so ugly. I tell them I like your shoes I show a lot of love from everybody. It makes me feel real good and that's why I show love.

-Pro-love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You really hit home with the things you said – a lot of people are surrounded by so much negativity or are so caught up in the struggle they simply don't know how to be happy for someone else. Sometimes it's not that people don't know how much work it takes to succeed but rather it is their own fear that they can't do it themselves. Kindness has almost become outdated – we don't know if people feel like being nice is seen as a sign of weakness or if people are so frustrated by their own situations they are blinded by anger but we are glad to hear that you try to rise above the pettiness. Keep striving to be a better man - it will serve you well.

Where Is The Love Hiding?

Where's the love
Around peaceful hugs?
Not smiling faces
But addicted to some healing drug.
Yeah where is love?
Where people stand for hope in language,
Where people walk only faithfully
And where hearts beat of love hopefully.
The love we have now is hurtful.
I am where the love is – not in the pills they pop, drank
And the purple.
I'm surrounded in a love cycle.
It's my own.
You may not invite hate in this love.

-Loved one, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a pretty solid poem. The simplicity in this poem is what makes it stand out. We also appreciate the positive message – God knows we need more people talking about love and hope. To point out that love comes from some place inside us and from a pill, bottle or blunt says a lot about you, and we are here to let you know you are on the right track.

Love And Beauty

My loneliness speaks out loud
About how I'm a soul sleeper on a cloud.
Touching my skin my flesh is soft within.
Eyes seem closed 'cause it seems like I'm dreaming.
My feelings are judiciary.
My days are so mournful.
I stare into a mirror
So I could find out why I'm so damn empty.
Letting out feelings so deep…they loudly speak.
Like always I'm separate from beauty
Beauty of love and care.
That's why into the beautiful sky I stare.
At times that's taken away
Being in a box for so many days.
My emptiness became more empty,
So alone, so incomplete.
Crying inside, needing two things:
Love and beauty

-Lil' Mainly Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Again you took to it to a new level with your art. Your words map out a journey of loss and pain and the eternal search for peace within and love from others. When you are young and something isn't happening, you almost feel cursed like it's never going to happen. But that's just it – you are young. You have a lifetime ahead of you and the answers will come, it just takes time. Be patient, stay strong and keep your head up.

So all I can do from here on out, is do what's needed for me to get back out there in the real world and do right.

The Free World

Boy oh boy! How much I've missed that there good free world! I mean, there's just so much out there that I'm missin' — a good job (everyone needs money); a good new car off the lot; and a new motorcycle (I love motorcycles, I need me a ninja!); and girls, girls, girls!

But the most important thing I'm missin' is all of my big, big family! I miss all my bad, bad lil' cousins that once used to get on my nerves hella much — but I miss that! Sometimes I wish I could change back the hands of time so I could make things better. I mean, I can sit here and write hecka pages of all the thangs I'm missin', but that still wouldn't change a thing. So all I can do from here on out, is do what's needed for me to get back out there in the real world and do right.

But sometimes when you expect something good that the courts say is going to take place on such and such date, and it don't happen, some people be feelin' like going all bad. I've thought about it, but I've never found it any use — so I hit push-up's instead.

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you've been going through it, waiting for your imminent transfer to CYA. It's been "any day now" for almost a month, and that is truly hard on the nerves. We understand how the stress and frustration can make you feel "like going all bad" — and we're all the more proud of you for realizing that route just puts you deeper in the punitive power of the system. Stay patient, you've already made the changes necessary in your heart — you will have everything you miss back in your life, and more! Stay strong, but more importantly: stay chill, patient and positive about yourself and your goals.

What Can I Say?

I'll be back someday.
It might not be this month or this year, but one day,
Remembering all the changes I say
Close by but in my mind far away.
Last week The Beat talked to us about quitting the game.
To me all of your comments and feedback are all the same.
You can't expect every ninja to change.
Y'all talk about it like it's easy
But y'all gotta walk in a ninja's shoes to believe me.
It's hard growing up in this would where everything is scandalous,
When being a young ninja is like "crabs in a barrel."
This society would be a better place if a ninja would pick up a pen and paper
Instead of a gun and some bullets
Or if a ninja knew how to read
Instead of knowing how to laid in a clip.
But that's the way it is
In every ninja's childhood - they lose faith at some point or hold on to it.
I feel it's messed up our ancestors fought and at the same time died for us to have rights
and learn to read.
Ninjas don't want to and don't know what it is to succeed
Sitting in boys' control, reminiscing about all the past times and fast times thinking about What the hell is happening to mankind.
I can't explain what attracts a ninja to this dirty game
I guess some extra change and the street fame.
A young ninja will think he knows it all
Until he drops the ball and ends up in the hall.
I don't think we will ever change
Unless we realize that it is not each other we need to blame.

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First and foremost, we are feeling this piece because it is honest, well-written and well thought out, even if we don't agree with all of the points you make. But that's okay; in fact that's part of what makes the Beat great. We don't expect or want everyone to write the same stuff – we want you to tell us what's on your mind, we want to hear what you have to say. We realize that some of the folks we talk to want to change and some don't and the only person who can make that decision is the person. When we encourage people to do something better with their lives, it's not because we don't understand how hard it is there. But life is hard work and no one said it was going to be easy - nothing that is worth having is easy. In a perfect world, all young people's needs and wants would be attended to by the people who love them. Reality of course tells us this is not the case so some kids do learn more about guns than books. But what do guns and the street mentality get you? Jail time, dead friends, broken relationships and distrust; people don't want to go to jail or lose lives but they don't know how to do anything else. And this is where hope comes in – hope and faith have served oppressed people for centuries. It was holding onto the thought that one day things must get better, which in turn kept them working hard and striving for the best. We don't know how you give people hope but we do know that you can't live without it. To say that's it's gone, oh well is just not good enough.

I Wish

It's been six months and two weeks since you died in sin.
Not one day, one minute, one second I'm gonna see my brother again.
I spent my whole life looking up to you.
I guess haters hate to see a real ninja shine.
I just wish I could talk to you, see you just one last time.
Nineteen when you died, 19 times you been shot.
They couldn't kill you the first time but the second time I guess was your time.
They took a brother, a dad, a patna and a son.
Another one like him, I doubt there will be one.
Selling weed, popping E's and sellin' blow.
God forgive us for our sins cause it's all we know.
Trell you never gonna be forgotten and always missed.
See you again, I wish, I wish, I wish.
(RIP Trell)

-Lil' Calvin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This gave us chills – the love you express for Trell comes straight through to the reader and hits them right in the gut, cause there is nothing worse than the pain of knowing you will never see a loved one again. We are very sorry for your loss and wish that no young person had to lose his/her life to the streets. Then you know what happens to us? We get angry. We get angry because no young person should lose his/her life to the streets. And you really struck a nerve when you say, "They took a brother, a dad, a patrna and a son." We wonder if the people who are so quick to pull the trigger get that. It's not just another dead ninja – we are talking about grandsons, cousins, fathers, best friends, sons and brothers that are dying. For every life that is taken, there are countless other lives that have to live with that loss. So we hope your piece reminds folks about that.

Sucked Into Life's Drama

Are you getting sucked into the drama of life, letting it grab a hold of you and pull you down? It's hard to not give into peer pressure and do what others are doing. By doing what you know is right, you're in control rather than doing the wrong.

Life is very easily controlling. It will repeat in patterns and won't change until you have control over your life. Example: You smoke a bowl or do a line, next thing you know, you no longer have control of when you want to use. You'll use whenever you got the chance. Instead of you wanting to get high just to have a good time, you'll need the drug to feel normal.

-Bethany, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Yes, it is hard not to give into peer pressure. But it gets easier the more you are able to do it, like any habit — including drug habits. You are also right that the control you exercise when you decide to smoke that bowl or do that line is gone as soon as you do it. It sounds to us that you are letting your brain keep you in control of your life.

It's hard to not give into peer pressure and do what others are doing.

A Better Tomorrow

Jail can make your entire heart ache
To yearn to be cared for
'Cause in prison you're scared.
Scared of the loss and pain
of losing everything you've gained.
The heart anguishes without light
but here it's perpetual night
You're constantly in sorrow,
Always waiting for a better tomorrow.
But when tomorrow will not come
You sit on your bed completely numb.
Even after you've been freed in trial
You're still just someone's file.
So even when the papers say go
The sad sad truth is the answer's NO!!

-Dr. Gonz, 15 OCrew

From The Beat: Wow, this says a lot about the system and how people can feel trapped in it. Your words are dripping with a pain and sense of loss that are really felt by your readers. There are so many things on this earth that we have little to no control over. But don't let the powers that be put a label on you – you are not just "someone's file." You are a talented young man, who is obviously capable and smart, so be more than just what some people expect.

It's been six months and two weeks since you died in sin. Not one day, one minute, one second I'm gonna see my brother again.

How I Feel

I feel like I'm moving places I'm not supposed to be. I feel like a dog that is tied up to something, all day, every day.

My last placement I was trying my hardest to be straight, but one of the staff members would not let me. I hate where I'm placed. It's never like home. There's only one place that is home, and that is my foster home.

-Carlos, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is well written and very touching, Carlos. We do want you to be honest with yourself about the problems at your last group home, though. That run in with staff had to be a two-way situation. Consider how you might have handled it differently – how you might have defused the situation, if you had it to do again. We wish you good luck and hope you can soon return to the family you love.

Lotta

You would think that drugs are the escapes in life
Looking back, it's that thing
That put a weapon in your hand
Like a knife
It's easy to see that you had been manipulated
It's that time in your life
That you absolutely hated
You had a label
A reputation
You were falsely accused
Every day now, you are asked,
"What did you use?"
The question is, "Will you go back?"
Look at your arms
Do you miss those tracks?
Are you willing to turn your back
Once again on the ones you love?
What are your dreams and aspirations?
To chill in front of the liquor store
For the rest of your life
Or become successful and have a wife?
What do you want to do?
The choice is yours
It's time to use that thing we call a "brain"
And decide whether you want to be clean
Or go completely insane!

-LH, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: There is nothing The Beat could add to your list of questions that you've now heard so often that you hear them in your sleep. These questions may be driving you insane, but they probably will help you in the end to make those choices that will allow you to live.

Yo Juego Con El Juego

Yo estoy jugando un juego nada mas no dejo que el juego me controle. Aveces no tengo control de las reglas. Cuando ganas, te sientes alegre y lo celebras, pero cuando pierdes te sientes bien enojado como si quieres pelear con alguién porque no aceptas que perdistes.

Ya sabemos que aqui ha habido personas que mueren pero es un juego que no nos gusta. Es cierto, pero yo digo que no es culpa de uno. Uno no sabe que va a pasar en el juego, pero cuando uno hace una regada lo meten en la cárcel.

Estando en la cárcel, aveces te imaginas que estas afuera, pero estas en la cárcel. Es sierto, nosotros no queremos estar aqui ni en ningún otro lado. Eso tú te lo imaginas en tu mente.

Me siento aqui preso en la juvenile. Estoy encerrado, pero pronto saldre.

From The Beat: ¿Si ya sabes que hay personas que han perdido sus vidas y su libertad en este juego, porque te arriesgas a jugarlo? ¿No tienes miedo de perder tu vida por algo insignificante? ¿Honestamente, dinos que has logrado jugando este juego? ¿Has ganado algo que te sirva en tu futuro? Es tiempo que empieces a pensar en tu futuro y lo que quieres realmente en este mundo.

I Play With The Game

I am playing a game. I just don't let the game control me. Sometimes I don't have control of the rules. When you win, you feel happy and you celebrate your victory, but when you lose, you feel very angry like if you want to fight with someone because you can't accept that you lost.

We already know that here, there have been people that have died, but it's a game that we don't like. Its true, but I say that it's not one's fault. One doesn't know what is going to happen in the game, but when you mess up, they toss you in jail.

Being in jail, sometimes you imagine that you are on the outs, but you are in jail. It's true. We don't want to be in here nor in any other place. This is what you picture in your mind.

I feel locked up here in Juvenile Hall. I'm incarcerated, but soon, I will get out.

-Elvin B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If you already know that there are people who have lost their lives and their freedom in this game, then why do you risk playing it? You're not scared to lose your life over something insignificant. Honestly, tell us: What have you achieved playing this game? Have you gained something that will serve you in the future? It's time for you to start thinking about your future and what is it that you truly want in this world.

Locked Up By Fear Of Getting Locked Up Again

I think it is possible to be locked up even when you're not in the halls, because in my case, I have a history of doing time and getting in trouble. The more I come in here, the more time I get.

When I'm on the outs, I feel locked up, because I'm scared to do anything, scared to go anywhere, 'cause I don't like coming back to the halls. I feel locked up because I feel that whatever I do is gonna get me in trouble and I'm gonna be back in here, doing time again. When I get out, I'm a try to stay out more than a month, 'cause doing time ain't for me.

-Beaver, Marin

From The Beat: We tend to agree with your opening statement. Now in order to find freedom inside of you is going to take a lot of work, but it has to come from you. How bad do you want to be free? How bad do you want to enjoy life? You should not feel fear. What are you scared of? Be you! Do not allow peer pressure to dictate your life. Handle your business! Go to school and do your program, it can be done

Why We Come Back

I've been locked up several times. For various reasons. I think that the reason people come back to places like this, is because when people first get out they try not to get in trouble, but eventually they stop trying and get caught up in bad things. I think that's why they come back.

-Abe B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very interesting (but short) piece. Can you think of anything that would help people remember how they hated it here when they're back home? Is it a matter of forgetting, or just not caring — or holding onto that children's thinking that they won't get caught?

STANDOUTS

How Do I Feel?

How do I feel
That I have to deal
Wit' the government
Giving the big L seal?
I feel mad
And so do my people
An' this ain't yo' every day
Sequel
Now I wanna ask you
How you feel
'Bout this government?
You really think they play fair?
An' actually really care?
I'm sorry to burst yo' bubble
You see
Ain't no Black or Asian people
Gonna be President
An' look at the governor of California
He ain't a born citizen
But still got the advantage
Because of that white skin color
So what y'all got to say
My brother?

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That ability of California Governor Arnold Schwarzenezzer to decide who in prison with Life sentences can be paroled and who must stay is pretty powerful. Sure from where you sit you say it is not fair, well what is fair? Once upon a time not long ago the governor of California was Black. The mayor of LA is Latino. Anything is possible, as frustrating as things may seem right now, you have to find hope It's very possible that someone of color could become president of the USA or governor of California. So don't be too surprised if someone of color becomes president, vice president of the US, or governor of California someday soon! If you were elected president or governor, how would you run the country or the state?

What Am I Waiting For?

I feel like with things I know now, I should learn from my mistakes. Especially when you know right from wrong, you know not to be ignorant. I think about my feelings and plan things for the future.

I know that everything you do wrong you get back two times as hard as when you done it. So when you think about it when you're in a position where you can't achieve your plans, and you can't do shhh about it.

Just think and feel so you break down to your feelings. I pray and talk to god when I can and tell him to help me fight temptation, which means under the influence of drugs and doing sins you know that are wrong. At the point you make the wrong move ain't no turning back.

So all my life I got long ways to live and I can't be doing the same thing over and over, like drugs.

When I say I'll quit... When? What am I waiting for? A messed up record? A messed up face? An ugly and unhealthy body? Life is a gift and I don't intend to waist it! Once you're gone, that's it, it's the same shhh. I'm not trying to prove anything.

-Ana GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've clearly thought hard about these issues in your life, Ana, and you've given us (and yourself) an intelligent analysis of where things are for you right now. So what's the answer to your question? What are you waiting for? Are you ready to put your words into action and change your life around? Once you have to endure any of the consequences you listed, you'll wish you had made the choice already.

Real Talk

Was up Beat? It's yo' boy young B. Today I'm going to talk about some real shhh 'cause the way my life is going, I'm looking at CYA. To tell you something real, YGC ain't shhh 'cause some of the staff be doing a ninja shady.

Like sometimes a staff will come to work in a good mood and be hella cool wit' you, then the next day they will come in wit' an attitude and take it out on you.

Sometimes I wish I was out 'cause I miss what the outs stand for. Like having fun, doing what I want to do. But now I miss my mom an' everybody I love 'cause now I see they were the only people that treated me with respect.

But now I'm sitting here thinking about what I could have done to stay out, 'cause now I'm missing something that I love and that is my life. Thank for listening to what I had to say. See y'all when I see ya. I'm out of here. Stay up to all. Ha ha ha ha.

-Young B B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are really encouraged, Young B, to read that you are thinking about what you can do to stay out of here. You have a first-class mind, so we know you won't have any trouble figuring out what to sacrifice in your life to preserve your freedom. Of course, knowing something is not the same as doing something. So, tell us some of the things you're thinking about changing — then tell us if you are really going to change or not.

A Hard Life

The dealer dealt me an' I played all my cards.
Much sadness an' madness an' more violence.
It got me locked up an' filled with silence.
Childish looks, suicidal thoughts an' man choices.
So much noise in the halls but only The Beat can hear our voices.

Get my enemy or be get.
The blood is gonna keep getting' spilled.
I keep my head up and pray.
But still my time is coming an' the guns continue to spray.
Before I lay down to rest
I'm gone
Show erribody I'm the best.
Because you never know who's next.

-Sharky B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What do you want to show everybody that you're the best at, Sharky? If you're trying to be "the best" gang banger or drug dealer or thug, the only people you'll be impressing are fellow inmates, because that lifestyle leads only to places like this or worse. We're very pleased that The Beat can hear your voice, but we hope you also hear our voice — and the voices of everyone who wants you to succeed in a life of freedom!

Wanting Out Is Not Enough

Everybody here just want to leave
Get out of this place called YGC
But most people don't do anything
To get out of this place
Getting all kind of room time
Getting in the counselors' face
Most ninjas say they out for the papa chase
But I bet they neva seen any type of large money at the same time
Saying they got scrappers and that they all shine
But if they did have all that money —
Why do they commit those robbery crimes?

-Pinguino B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It is a kind of mystery that so many people hate being here so much — but not enough to keep themselves out of the trouble that leads here or worse. What about you, Pinguino? What are your plans for when you get out? What do you plan to do differently to stay out?

Young Kids Make It Hard

Life is hard when you make it hard. Why do young kids make this lifetime so hard for people to think they're not safe when they walk down the streets? Young kids make things not safe because of money. Money is just a tool to life that you just buy things with.

I mean like, why do kids behave in that way? You're just going to be locked up for life or dead. Your block is always going to be there, but not for you, but for the new kid that grows up. The money is good, but is yo' life worth it? Kids sell crack dese days because the money is good. But you don't have to sell crack to make money. Go get a job an' live you' life right.

-Man Man B1, SF/YGC

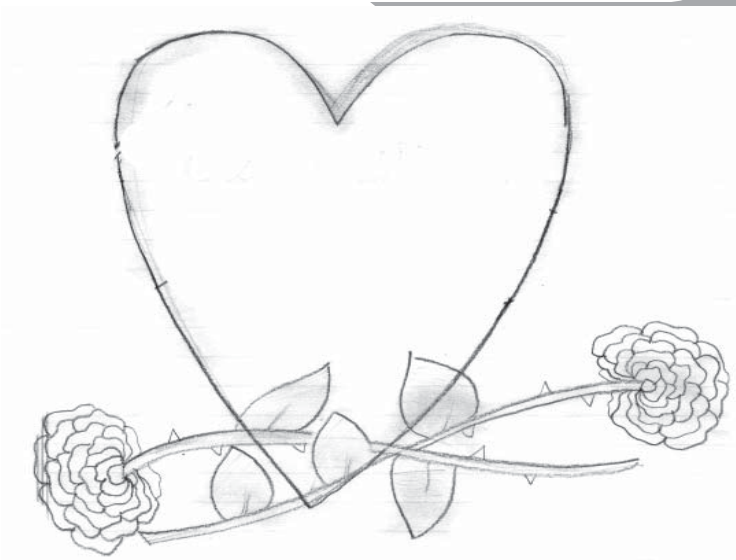
From The Beat: As usual, you give excellent advice, Man Man. Do you plan to get a job when you leave here (and when you get out of school)? What kind of job are you hoping to do? What is your plan for staying off the block and doing the right thing when you walk out of here?

How I'm Feeling

It's Young Slim
And I feel like I miss my kin
Friends and riches
I done fell to the bottom
But still wasn't my fault
He attempted to talk the talk
So his body got flopped
Cops close the door and turned the lock
I'm lost in the system
Getting flipped from unit to unit
Confused and lost
It's a depression
Equal to the Holocaust
All I feel is the thrive for freedom
I got goals and I'm really trying to achieve
All these failures
I try to leave
Most don't plan to fail
But fail to plan
And it's not me
I'm trying to be free
I'm gone
It's time to leave.

-Slim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So, Slim, what's your plan? You claim to have hit your bottom, so what is it gonna take to pick yourself up? Plan! Create a plan for yourself and a back up plan incase the plan fails.



Unlock My Door

Four small walls
Cold empty rooms
No where to go
Nothing to do
No one to talk to
No one to trust
Nights are lonely and cold
Days are meaningless and long
Let me out this stupid cell
Also known as mini Hell
Give me an opportunity to prove
I am ready for change
Unlock my door
Set me free
I promise you
You will be pleased
No more locked doors, staff
Goodbye all, behind those locked doors.

-Suggas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great poem – and goodbye to you too. Best of luck. You know the feeling of being incarcerated so you neeed to do your best to succeed and get the word out to your friends that juvenile hall is no joke, and school is the way to go!

To Me

For me winning the game is: first, finishing high school, graduate with a good GPA and get a job and save up for college. So I could go to a good college. Then after I graduate college I am going to get a good job. I retire after 30 years but hope I make it past 25 years old. That, to me, is winning the game.

-Sembad B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That sounds like a good plan. How will you put winning into action? Are you doing good in high school? What high school do you want to graduate from? What do you want to study in college?

How I'm Feelin'

To tell y'all the truth, I can't say I feel good, 'cause I'm up in here, but I'm-a spit something fo' my ninjas, on the real, how I feel:

I feel like a lion wit' rage
Locked up in a cage
I'm in here fo' some bullshhh man
All you do is stand on yo' square man
Get yo' head call man
Take it to yo' room man.'

-Lil' TT, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice flow... Now, get your life together. There are probably a lot more interesting things to flow about life on the outs. What do you think?

Life Is No Sport

It's hard to comprehend that I'm in jail.
I could be on the outs with my girl
But instead I'm in a cell.
I told myself I'd never come back to this hell
But I'm back still.
I'm not sure how I feel.
My time here I know is short.
But still I was foolish to play life like a sport.

-Be E-Z, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we get on you guys for not writing enough, although we are pleased to get any writing long or short. But this was a great, concise piece that hit home. It is obvious you regret the choices you have made that brought you back to this place. Funny how even with the best of intentions, we can still get sidetracked and suddenly end up in the very place we said we wouldn't be. We all slip up. Now you know you have to do better and work harder.

STANDOUTS

My Life

I started off in my mama's belly as a little seed and the life ahead was misery. I was born on September 13, 1988 - it was a week before my mother's birthday. Dad was locked up when I was born at Camp Sweeny (back then they called it something else). He was just another deadbeat dad that didn't care about anybody but his self. People say when they were in situations like these they were just little kids but that's still not an excuse for the physical and emotional abuse or growing up as a sad dependent of the court for 14 years, bringing many tears.

But that just makes me now not want to do the same thing. I don't want to be another man that doesn't take care of his kids so what I'm gonna do is take care of my kids when I have kids. I'm not gonna be like my mom and definitely not like my dad, 'cause he made me hella mad. I'm gonna do what I need to do to feed my seed and support him/her.

-A young man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Saying that you don't want to be another dad that doesn't take care of his kids and being a man that actually takes care of his kids are two very different things. We respect and admire that after all you have been through it has only made you stronger and a better person. But words mean very little unless there is action to support them. Since you don't have kids yet all you can do is talk but when the time comes to remember these words. You are a smart young man who understands things that even some adults don't get so you are on the right track.

Good Days And Bad Days

This week I don't feel too good. I think I'm getting sick. I don't like it when I get sick because I don't get sick very often. When I get sick, I get really sick. I hope I start to feel better. If I feel better fast than I won't get sick real bad.

Everyday in the hall seems like a repeat of the last day. So I use it to my advantage. I try to do better then the last day. Some days aren't so good and some are ok but the days I like the most are the days that are great. It might be hard to believe that there are good or great days in the hall but there are, even though there are better than good days on the outs because good days on the outs happen a lot more and in here sometimes they never come.

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well thank you for writing even though you weren't feeling well. We know that the halls are hard place to be sick because that's when the comforts and pampering of the outs can be key to making us feel better. And we can totally see how each day in the halls feels like the last. We know how serious you are about making some changes to your life so when we read the line "So I use it to my advantage...I try to do better then the last day" because this attitude will take you far in life. Instead of worrying about what you want to do or can't be done, you are focusing on what's in your control. You should be proud of yourself because you are thinking like an adult.

"Don't Be Like Me! You're Smarter Than That!"

I'm feeling kinda mad. Why? Because I just found out that my brother is in the Hall — and I'm hella mad!

I'm at Camp, and he might be coming up here. It makes me mad! Because I know I've failed as a big brother. He looks up to me — so I think the reason he was messing up on the outs is because he was trying to be like me.

I wish I could've told him different. From what I hear he's on his way up to Camp, so I will get to talk to him and tell him, "Don't be like me! You're smarter than that!" That's why I feel bad, because I wasn't a good role model for him — sorry lil' brah!

-Baby Boi Mo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Baby Boi, you're smarter than that, too. And it's not too late to be a good role model for your little brother, 'cause now what he needs to learn is that you can mess up, get burned by the system — and still decide to turn yourself around, start to listen to wisdom, and do right in your life. Even though your life is a mess, you can turn it around and be a success! Don't just tell him what you know, show him the right road!

we walked from Camp to Berkeley today! We left this morning at 6:00 AM, and we got back at 4:00 PM

The 25-Mile Hike

What's up? Man, this Relly-bo, and I'm talking about this hike today! Man, we walked from Camp to Berkeley today!

We left this morning at 6:00 AM, and we got back at 4:00 PM — so it was a long walk! Most of it was up hills and we got really muddy.

Man, I ain't had fun like this since I was eleven years old! Three of us had mud fights, and we was playing with the staff. I fell two times; one time I fell, it was on purpose!

Came back and took a shower, and now I'm about to eat. Well, that's all I did. Now I'm getting ready to go to sleep after I eat.

-Relly-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like a great day and a lot of fun, even though everybody was limping across the yard by the time they got back to Camp. It might sound silly, but we're proud of you, too. Now if only you could take this experience and realize there are a lot of ways to have fun better than popping E's, drinking 'bo and smoking blunts. And better ways to make money than those street hustles that in the end lead to jails, hospitals and death. So get legit and do your best!

I Am On My Way, Right?

I feel like I was playing the game and I slipped for a minute because I'm in here. When I wasn't incarcerated I was making the grade and doing what I was supposed to do. Childhood friends tried to have me sink to their level but I was too smart for that.

Instead I hung around people who wanted to do good and were doing good in school and in their lives. I wanted to be that way. These new people I surrounded myself with helped me better myself in many ways.

-Terrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good for you Terrell. What happened that brought you back here? Young people often forget how much influence the people who surround you have. And that influence shapes not only what you do but also how you see the world and the people in it. We are so proud to hear that you had the courage and the brains to do what it takes to be the best person you can be. Don't give up 'cause you are on the right track.

The Time Is Now

See it's my time to quit the game now because I just got out and here I am right back in. I could stop the game now just by seeing these white walls all the time. Mainly the things that will make me quit is putting God first and then my family. It just makes me look stupid smoking grapes and stealing form people. I have a family at home that I would love to be with and live with until I die.

I remember when I told myself I would never come back and I kept my word for a long time but as soon as I say I need money I got back to doing the same shhh. Soon as I did, it was over I came right back. The only way to get paid is to have a job. If not it's jail or dead.

-Lil' Corn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard when we keep making the same mistakes, even when we feel like we know better and we sincerely want to change. We are glad to hear that you are not giving up, in spite of your troubles. Look, change is never easy and there will be some slip ups, some mistakes. And you are learning from your mistakes, which is the best you can do, but you just have try harder.

Just Wishing

Sitting here behind these walls,
Wishing it wasn't Juvenile hall,
Just wishing I could go home and be with my family,
Sitting in my room thinking this is not the life for me.
I don't want to be known as the person who stole
people's goods
Or robbed people for their wallets or purses.
I want to be known as the person
Who gave to people and do good things.

-Lonnie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well it is never too late to start over and none of us our angels. We all have regrets and things we've done we wish we could take back. Don't focus so much on who you were but rather who you are going to be from here on out. Good piece and don't forget there is only one man that controls you – Lonnie.

Life

Dear Beat,

Hey it's Lil' Neph again just kickin' it, doing my time. This time has been real hard, especially now, because I only have a little time left. I think about it more now than I ever thought about anything in my life. Me knowing that this is my last time in here is really scary because I'm going to be an adult. When I get out, it's going to be a really hard world out there.

I know I can do what I put my mind to. Life does not always go as you have planned but if you strive to make it in this world and push yourself up, whenever you fall can't nothing stand in your way.

-Lil' Neph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like that last line, that's deep. We know you can do this too. Trust us, we have seen you mature and know that you are ready to face anything that's waiting for you out there. And it's good to be scared. If you were super cocky and saying, "I am not worried about a damn thing," we would be worried. People forget that fear isn't always bad. Sometimes it keeps us ready for the next challenge that awaits us and helps us stay focused.

My Dreams Are Telling Me Something

Hey Beat; it is me Phil again. I know I talk about changing but today I want to talk about a dream I had the other night. It all started when I was at home. I was set to go out with my friends but the funny thing is that they had no faces. We were driving down the street and we were all smoking crystal. To us smoking crystal in a car while driving is no big deal.

I was in the passenger seat and they went to pass me the pipe. I don't know how but I knew it was a dream and decided I didn't want to smoke because I really do want to change. So I was going to jump out the window to wake myself up. At first I thought what if this isn't a dream but I ended up doing it. It was a good thing it was that a dream because I woke up.

I was glad to be in the hall for the first time in my life. I think that I jumped out the window because I really want to change and for that I am thankful. I never had a dream that I could control. I hope I have more like that.

-Phil, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know it may sound a little silly but our dreams can tells us a lot about our hopes and fears. Even though this was a dream, it is a likely situation you could find yourself in on the outs. And you will have to make some tough decisions because it is so easy to slip back into our familiar habits, good and bad. Your dream shows you are going to work extra hard to turn down old temptations if you really want to make real changes to your life. Don't ever have any doubts that you can do this. Funny thing that a place you really don't like, the halls, can go from bad to good so quickly! It's good to be worried, not it only will it keep you on your toes, it will make you work harder to achieve your goals.

Life Wit' Only a Heart's Death

Like wit' only a heart's death
Is a chapter to a night passage wit' only a memory left.
So only something remains, not beautiful.
Become forgotten because the truth and love own that
person.
Was lost because of you.
Combustion is what you have wit' dark hate.
With yourself you beat up which brings
Ugly pains and your feelings become unbearable.
That beautiful someone is now more
Beautiful empowered by thoughts because the pain
Is a feeling and what you have done was a thought and walk.
Not only a way but no bar in a dark place,
Which leaves you wit' a life only hearts death.

-Lil' Manny the Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The tricky thing about poetry is that sometimes we get so caught up in trying to produce something beautiful and deep but the meaning we want to convey gets a little lost. This is beautifully written and you definitely have a very unique style that is all your own. Next time focus on bringing the ideas together so that your poem has your signature style and clearer meaning.

The Game Is Old, Real Old

See the game is old. I'm talking real old. The game has been going on before I was born. I'm talking about when my mom and dad were my age and young. Around that time everybody's goal and dream was about getting money. That was the only solution; back in the day people will smoke drugs, sell drugs, have sex with females and even sell their females. Today people are still doing the same thing and they think it's all good.

But guess what? It's all reruns. Come on now, everybody my age and a little younger, y'all have to understand and look at the big picture. The game is getting old, like I said real old, and don't think y'all invented the game or y'all on top of it like A-1 Sauce because everyone knows the game well, just like you do. To tell you the truth they are probably the one who knows the game like the OG's, probably the ones who taught you the game but what I'm trying to tell ya'll is get out of the game before it's too late.

-Demarrious, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Preach on Demarrious – you are speaking the truth. Not only is your piece full of great points, it is also written in a manner that makes us readers feel like we are having a conversation, a hard to task to accomplish in writing. It is the curse of every generation – they think they are the first ones to do a lot of things that have been around for years. But in this case folks can see the long-term effects of the game and they aren't good, they aren't pretty and they certainly aren't worth it. A couple of the best lines I have heard in a while is, "...Y'all have to understand and look at the big picture. The game is getting old, like I said real old, and don't think y'all invented the game or y'all on top of it like A-1 Sauce." The game is getting old, along with the consequences of playing. You have wised up and expect that you will continue spreading your knowledge on the outs for years and years to come.

The Real Game

I think the game is playing you.
Say the game is a board game and you ain't making the right
move.
That means you ain't gonna win.
To me the game is going to school, doing the right thing,
having a job and going to college.

-A Winner, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great comparison – if you were playing a board game and your strategy wasn't working you would come up with a new plan. The game should be about doing the right thing, getting a job or pursuing education. Thanks for the positive words.

STANDOUTS

The Game Isn't Over

Let me drop a few lines 'bout this topic of game: I think I'm playin my game, because I control my decisions. I don't let other people control them.

But it's not an easy game like checkers; it's more complicated than that, more like chess. You have to think about every move you make, because every piece is valuable. A pawn can someday become a queen. Just as in life, any ordinary girl can become the special one — and when you're down and out, they can bail you out.

In the situation I'm in, I made a wrong move and it cost me — but the game isn't over. The king in me, is still up, and until I'm down and out, I will not lose this game. I have always been in control, but I just made wrong moves once in a while. Once I leave this place I'm in, I won't make more mistakes (wrong moves), and I will win.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to think larger than getting bailed out of jail — think about staying out of jail. What it will take though, is getting out of the street (criminal) hustle. That is key to winning in the game of life. The biggest mistake you can make is to return to a life of crime. The thing about chess is you have to think way past your next move: stop going after pieces and focus on your (life) plan. Change your game if you want to win, man!

The Beat Speakers

When them speakers came, I really respected the way they expressed themselves about how they experienced going to jail and the pen' — and getting out and getting their lives together. What they was sayin' was real though, and ninjas need to respect that, 'cause they didn't have to say nothing to us, or even come up here. To me, that's people showin' how much they care about helping young people get their lives back on track and succeed in getting out and staying out of this hell hole called juvenile justice.

-Lil' Loe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, those are three pretty impressive young men. They don't have anything you don't have though, except for that change of attitude you praise in your piece — caring about others' futures and caring about your own, go hand in hand (it's may not sound logical but it's the way of the human heart).

Furious

You cannot gage the amount of rage I hold inside,
I cannot hide
From furious emotion,
A fiery commotion
Of pent up stress,
An emotional mess.
Feelings not of the norm
But consumed by a violent storm
The best I can do is ride it out and
Contain the anger neither scream nor shout.

-Dr Gonz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Anger is one of the most dangerous and powerful emotions – not only can it drive us to do things we regret but also if left festering within, it can eat away at our sanity and our minds. At the same time, when we feel like we have been put through hell and back, it's hard not to be a little angry. You have to find a way to let ago and we can't tell you how to do this. Maybe it's talking to a close friend, maybe it's writing, maybe it's through shooting hoops. Whatever way it is, you have to do it otherwise anger wins and you lose.

Keep To Yourself

Have you ever wonder why
When you go down, yo' ninjaz don't cry?
Now you locked up wit' ninjaz you don't know
Don't have a choice, no place to go.
Ninjaz talking shhh in the hall,
Tryin' to see if you got the balls
To take off and mess up your release.
But only if you was on the outs then they will see,
On theouts you can be a beast.
But being locked up you gotta stay on your feet
When they talk shhh just keep yo head high
And if it gets to you don't' let it show.
Talk to the staff let 'em know what's goin' on.
Let 'em know the problem and what's goin' on inside your dome.
When ninjas tell you to take off don't listen
Cause the ninjas talking shhh thats all he want to do –
Screw up your chance or getting released
so you can stay in there wit him too.
'Cause you can be getting release in two weeks and he ain't getting release no time soon.
Think 'bout what will happen.
You will be in here longer
Now you mad and that ninja laughin'.
So keep your cool and don't let nobody pump up your head.
Forget what them ninjaz say, listen to what the staff says.
In the hall some ninjas will be cool enough and tell you just to be cool.
And the next ninja will tell you to take off
on the way to school.
So this is for all my ninjas in this unit and the staff
Good lookin' out and those who try to help.
Those who did help
And those who told you to take off, now you know
You gotta keep your yourself.

-Alex, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is interesting because you do some shhh talking that is a little unnecessary at times that gets at the heart of the very problem you say you are tired of. It's this kind of talk that fuels beefs, which can turn into fights, which in turn can delay your release. But at the same time we like the advice you are giving – keep your head up and don't let anyone else's silliness get to you. In life there are times when you just have to keep your mouth shut and keep moving. You make a very powerful observation when you talk about how fighting can just get you more time while the guy who might have started the fight is going to be in the halls for a while any way, so what does he care? When you feel like you got nothing, you have nothing to lose. But when you are working toward something, you really have to think before you act.

STANDOUTS

I Already Quit

I been quit the game.

People get taken out the game everyday and I don' t mean that they quit. I mean they were shot and killed on the block, like my boy. He was selling weed and getting that paper; people were always hating and killed him. That hit me in a place it hadn't hit me before. I love the boy like a brother.

Anyway I quit the game because of my baby little girl and my wife. I stress everyday because I'm in here away from my family.

I hate this damn place - people don't show you love but the people from the turf or people you know. When my baby girl was born, I quit the game. I threw the drugs in the garage so I could change my life around.

-Joseph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's crazy how things work. We can see the same things time and time again and then one day something just hits us and suddenly we get it. It sounds like this is what happened with your boy who got killed. You probably knew of other folks who lost their life to the streets but this death really touched you in a way that made it real, that reminded you how precious your own life is and how much you want to live for you and your family. In this piece it makes sound like you are already out of the game and if that's the case, what brought you back here? We know the system can be tough to escape so keep your eye on the prize and never give up.

To The One Who Left Me Behind

You make it seem like this is my fault and yeah some of it is
But my whole life been puttin' men in front of your kids.
To you I'm under the bridge and that's why I stick with thugs
And in your book I guess your waters' thicker than blood.
For me it's liquor and drugs but I surrender the truth.
Tonight I'll pray for you in hope that you remember ' your roots.
In '99 I was the one that was expected to fall.
In 2000 grandma kicked me out and I slept in the car.
But I ain't mad at that, just wish you'd see the depth of my heart.
The hardest part was findin' out that you neglected my Calls.
And that's eleven bars to let you know how I feel
And I got several to settle scores.
Just know that it's real.
It's been bottled up for so long.

-Buddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As always, you have chosen your words carefully to craft a poem that really puts your experiences into the readers' head. It is always tough to pull someone who has no idea who you are into your world but you have done so in a poetic and touching way. Words hold far more power than we realize and not just for the people reading. We are sure that writing this helped ease your mind, even if for a second, even if it was just for a little bit. Sometimes the people we are trying to reach just won't ever get it so we have to make peace with the situation on our own terms, in our own way.

Life

Stuff happens if you let it.
Live life and don't regret it.
Get in where you fit best
Or lie down and die down like all the rest.
All us got loved ones with their face on a white tee.
I've seen friends die so try me.

-Be Eazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Although very, very, very short this poem has a nice flow to it. Yet it is very dark – you talk about death so "matter of factly." We know that a lot of young people have seen and been through a lot, which can have a kind of numbing effect on the mind and heart. But just remember there is a world, which you could be a part of, where death is such a regular part of living.

i love you baby and i need you in my heart you stayed by my side from the very first start

Just Life

When I look around I know I don't belong here. We just had church and people don't even understand God. Really, people do not know about life. I come from a cool family and it's not too many people locked up in here that have a family. But I see how it's a person talking to us, trying to help us, and people just look and laugh like she's funny or something. All I can think is they must be stupid.

I don't really think people are stupid, I think they are lost. I messed up and came back but when I do get out you won't see me anymore.

The thing that's funny is people, as in staff, talk to us all day and you could look around and see who don't care. Well, me, I'm my own person and I'm going to remember everything, not just let it go in one ear and out the other.

-Cartier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We must say Cartier you are ahead of the curve. You took the words right out of our mouth – we too were going to say that these young men are not stupid but lost. We also think that being in the halls is an opportunity and not just punishment. A lot of times when we are young, we feel like we know everything and no one can tell us what to do, but of course that's just not the case. The more you actually learn about something the more you see how much learning you have to do – it's the true sign of enlightenment. And you are smart cat, taking everything that you can from this experience and applying it to making a better life for yourself. You can see how lucky you are to have family support; lean on them and take advantage of the love that you get from them, a love that so many others would kill to have.

Love, Love, Love

the feelings i got for you is so deep inside
every time i think about you i want to cry
i'm begging for your love 'cause i want you in my life
every time i think about you i have a dream about you at night when my days go by locked up in these cells
thinking about you like what the hell
what i just did was so damn wrong
thinking about you wishing i was still at home
when i think about you i feel like a old school rolling stone
you my baby — my love — my soul — my everything
if you wasn't in my life i'd probably lose my brain
thinking and stressing — i'd probably go insane
locked in a cage thinking about the blues
i talk about you so much people think i'm a fool
i love you baby and i need you in my heart
you stayed by my side from the very first start
everything you say to me all them feelings i store
you touched me in a place and that's my core
baby i love you always and forever
i'll never leave you baby i promise never

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You know we're happy for you that you're in love and your love is reciprocated, but we're happier still that you know what you did to get yourself incarcerated was wrong — and not just the one that got you caught up for so long. The key to staying free goes way beyond whether or not you get caught ('cause keep doing wrong and it's just a matter of when you get locked up again), staying free requires that you act on your desire to do what's right with your life — get a job and go home to your baby every night.

STANDOUTS

You Are Ripping Us Apart

Dedicated to crack
You are ripping us apart.
Before you came the triangle never broke
We were bonded and melded as one
But as the two pushed you away
The one got weak and embraced you
And now you are ripping us apart
The worst feeling of helplessness
The greatest pain has rested in my heart
The vision of heaven fades
And the nightmare of loneliness has started
My hero has been defeated by you
And know what can I do
Watch as you destroy us
And our love is finally through
I know the worst is here
I feel it in my heart
You got into the circle
And now you are ripping us apart.

-F. Baby Jr., 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'd love to know more about this fine poem, about what you've been through, and where it's coming from. It sounds like these words are just the tip of the iceberg of your life story and we want to hear more of it.

When I Get Out

When I get out I wanna change.
When I get out I wanna go my own way.
So if I follow the next person I'm not a leader
So if I lead the next person I'm not a follower.
When I get out I don't wanna keep to myself.
I want friends that are good, no on else.
I don't want to be locked up no more.
Don't want to come back to this place that puts me behind locked doors.
So what if I go the right way?
What can the next person say?
And if I go the wrong way
Then everybody say that's not okay
So I wish I can do good
And I don't have to go back to the hood.
Everybody says I should,
I could and I would do good.
I didn't know why I'm in here
But everybody knows I don't belong here.
So should I go there?
When I get out I'm gonna go there
This I swear.

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can hear your fierce determination coming out in this piece. It sounds like you are serious about taking the next step in getting your life in order. And it is also good to hear that you know it is going to require some major lifestyle changes, like finding new people to hang out with. Oftentimes people go from one extreme to the other – they say I am not going to talk to anyone, which is almost impossible because friendships are important to us, or they say I am going to kick it with my old friends but I am not going to get into the same stuff, which is almost impossible because the temptation to slip into old ways is just too great. Don't wish to do good – just do it. Obviously it is in you and it sounds like you are ready to do some real growing so keep your head up and, like you said, be a leader and not a follower.

So if I follow the next person I'm not a leader
So if I lead the next person I'm not a follower.
When I get out I don't wanna keep to myself.
I want friends that are good, no on else.
I don't want to be locked up no more.

Days In Juvie

How many days do I have to look at theses walls?
How many days am I going to have to be in the halls?
Days in juvie ain't no joke
They take your freedom and your freedom of speech
Give you food that make you choke
And when you're in yo' room
The only thing you can think about is a blunt or two
My days in juvie are nothing like home
I'm in here wearing the next girl's dirty pantyhose
I was laughing when I made the choice for me getting here
But when I got here it wasn't no joke
I pray to god every night to go home
And I pray to god to watch over my family while I'm gone
So take my advice
Try not to do anything wrong
Or you'll end up here wanting to go home
Live life while you can
And don't let no one take your freedom

-Nuke GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What excellent advice this is, Nuke. So now that you know what it's like in here, what changes do you plan to make on the outs that will keep you on the outs? What's going to be the hardest part of staying free?

Step My Game Up

How am I feeling? Well right now I'm feeling hella mad, because the DA tried to play me and make it seem like my parents never did nothing fo' me and I'm not worthy or capable of being on the streets and I'm gon' be in the pen in a couple of years, like he know me and exactly what I'm gon' do and what happened, wasn't even my fault and what they don't know, I was tryin' to change my life, go to school, my high school diploma or my GED, stop smoking drinking, poppin' and all that but since they tryin,' faget it.

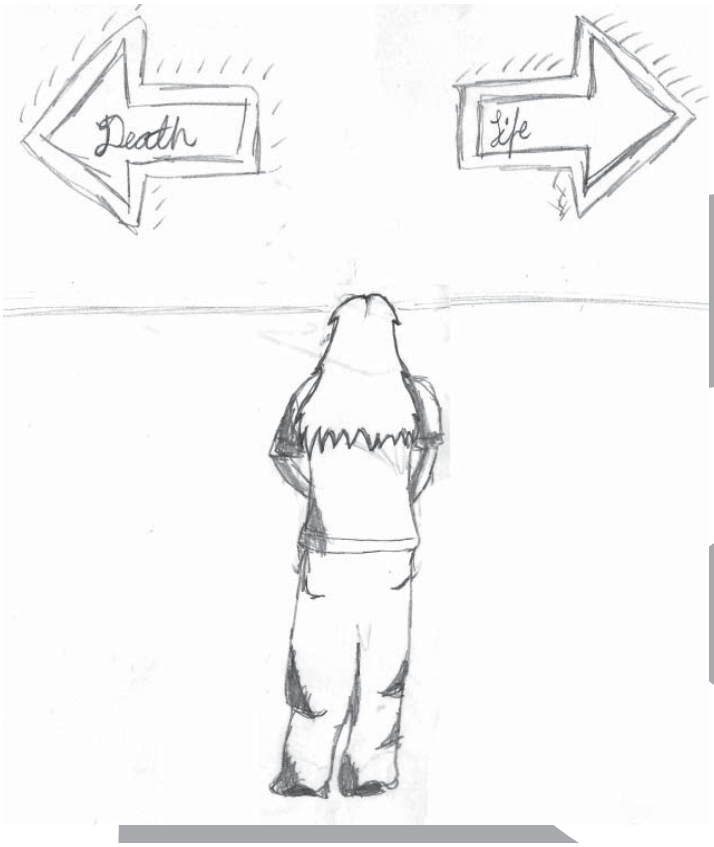
Might as well do my program and when I get out, do what I do and step my game up.

-Darryl, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's the DA's job to do paint as negative a picture of you and your life as he/she can, but you write like you started to believe that picture was true! That isn't you ... what he said about you has nothing to do with you, your heart, your future. Maybe you'll be in the pen, maybe you'll be in college, maybe you'll be in – Spain! Or New York! That DA is not a fortune teller. The only person who can write your life story is you. If you know you were trying to change your life, that's what matters. It didn't work this time around, but if you get enough help and support, that doesn't mean you can't do it next time. Like you said, step your game up. So the question is how, how will you do it.

DA tried to play me and make it seem like my parents never did nothing fo' me and I'm not worthy or capable of being on the streets

STANDOUTS



Forget the Game

The game is playing me. Because every time I try to do something the right way, it's always wrong. There's always someone who says that they're playing the game, but people don't realize that the game will get you no where but six feet deep or in jail, and no one wants to be in jail. They might try to act hard in front of they patnas or something but me, I know. I done seen people say one thing but behind closed doors they soft as cotton candy on a rainy day.

The way I feel, it's like forget the game on mama's. 'Cause when you try to do something right, the rest of the people who in the game will laugh at you because you're at least trying. But the rest are too much of a sissy to try, or they just don't know how to try.

But to all my people. Good Luck.

-Lb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Correction—the game is trying to play you. If you bring half as much insight and maturity to your fight with the game as you do to you're writing, you're going to win this much. Sure people might laugh, but like you write – they've got their own problems, holding them back. Turns out it's not about being "hard," it's about being smart enough to stay straight on your own path. Then who wins?

No Control In This Game

Right now the game of life is not going my way. Obviously because I'm incarcerated. Right now you could say the judge and the DA are playing chess with my life. I have no control over the judge's decision to where he'll send me, to who he'll send me to, to when he'll send me.

-Unknown, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Good metaphor, it's like the system turned you into a pawn. But the thing is you can't control the what the judge does, but you can control how you handle it, can't you? How do you intend to handle it? Because that's what matters. That's how you win the game.

To Live And Die In The Bay

"See ya always in our memories, and that's where you'll always stay. I know I can't see you, but we'll all be there one day. So hear these words I'm sayin' 'cause these words are oh so true. There will never be another and no one can replace you" – SL

Saludos, Beat, wit' honor and embracements laced wit' loyalty to all those worthy, and livin' to die. The way we grow up in the Bay is to die. Well I can't speak for you, but livin' in the varrio, growin' up wit' some straight hitters, it seems like we're just livin' to die. Just like (writer) Luis A. Rodriguez says, "We were yelling out our set on the outside. But on the inside, we were screaming "'Please kill us.'"

Some of us is just out there tryin' to live, tryin' to get by. But livin' this life I've chose, it feel like I'm livin' to die. We are all destined to die some day. You never known when that stray bullet will hit you. To become another face on an RIP shirt is what I'm tryin' to dodge.

There's hella homies that lived this life just to end up six feet deep. We poured our liquor for you, kept you in our thoughts and prayers. Tagged up names of all the fallen soldiers in the game. When my time comes, it comes, screw it. I'll be able to set all my pains, blood, sweat and tears free. So many tears, so much blood shed, so many battle scars. All I can say is to all my soldados and loved ones, see you on the other side.

-Young Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So many tears, so much blood, so many battle scars, you said it. It's like this big old dance of death. What can be done to stop it? Rodriguez found an answer, found a way to understand the screaming on the inside, the cry beneath the cry, and by understanding that, be became something very different... I don't know if "changed" is so much the word, because I don't know if he'd say he'd changed or if he found his true self. What is the answer you are going to find?

To become another face on an RIP shirt is what I'm tryin' to dodge.

Never Take It For Granted

There's an old wise tale that says you never miss a good thing 'til it's gone. I have been to so many funerals and witnessed people feeling guilty. They're having to carry the heavy burden as they have reflected on the way they treated someone before they passed on.

As I grew and matured, I have learned never to take for granted friendships and the people dear to my heart, and always try to love as if there is no tomorrow, for they could be here today and gone tomorrow. The following people have all in one way or another, big or small, been a part of my life and although they are gone but they will surely not be forgotten. In loving memory of Big O, Ju-Ju Matthew, Qiana M.A.T. Meezy, Bow-Wow

-Onio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's beautiful to read how you value your loved ones – do you have that same love for yourself as well, that same desire to make every day of your life as precious as possible and to take care of this life and treasure it? If so, how?

Knowledge Inside And Out

Every day I sit and think
Who in the outside world
Knows me for me?
And I could only think of one person
And that's my brother.
But then I think
Who in the world I live in
While locked up
Understands me for me?
Because they read my file
But they still don't understand me for me
Because they have never seen
How I am while not locked up
And that's why I say
While I'm locked up
"Nobody understands me for me"

The things that people don't know
Is that I am a very caring person
And nice to get along with
And they don't know
That I am very dangerous
And can be cruel
And evil at times
They don't know
That I am very serious
And don't play games
The reason they don't know this
Is because this is not the type of behavior
I want to display
While locked up
And I'm going to be myself
For the rest of my life

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Solid poem you deliver here. You are right there are many people who do not know who you truly are, but all they know is what your files states and that's good enough for them. Or people only know you by who you associate with. If you really want more people to not only understand you but respect and admire you, then the time is now to make some difficult but life changing choices, and one being getting out of the life that brings you to jail and getting your life back on track! We're pulling for you.

Scharod

My ninja
Who loved to play football
Got shot
For liking to go to parties
And dance beyond the walls

On the bus
With no music
He didn't want to stop

He died
At the age of fifteen
And if still alive
He would be seventeen

He loved chicken nuggets
And to mess around with girls

I remember when you told me
"Girls are my world"

You always went to school
Because you wasn't no fool

RIP, my ninja, Scharod
I love you
And I miss you

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Many young men and women who write for The Beat have given us beautiful paeans to Scharod. He must have had many friends who love and miss him terribly. You capture his sense of whimsy, tenderness and strength. What else did you learn from him? Has his death inspired you to see beyond the lifestyle that brings you here?

The things that people don't know Is that I am a very caring person And nice to get along with

Strange Passion

My head is in a maze
Because my feelings for you are so strong
And I barely know you.

Many nights I read the letters
You wrote me
And I get a subliminal passion
To have a relationship with you.

My thoughts of you
Put me at peace.

I will carry you in my thoughts
Wherever I go.
My feeling for you
In time will grow.

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Lovely, tender poem. Isn't it amazing how different people, in this case different ladies, affect you? This lady brings you feelings of passion and peace. Does she give you a reason and strength to get through your program, off the Ranch, and to go back home? And to stay out of the streets? If so, keep her and listen to her and those who really care for your safety!

Legal Or Not

They killed Tookie Williams
No, it was not right
The people that killed him
Are no different than people
That shoot at each other every night
What gives them the right
To take another man's life?
The way I feel
It's just not right
There's nothing you can say
To make me feel different
But the code on the street is
You live by killin'
So people that's killin'
Shouldn't go to prison
'Cause they doin' the same thing
As the government doin'
And it ain't no different

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That's right, regardless, killing be it on the streets, in prison, in war in Iraq, or by the government is not right!

The Grim Reaper

Who is the Grim Reaper?
He lurks the streets day and night.
He doesn't like to fight.
He's mainly out from 11pm-4am,
Looking for the next victim of the streets.
He's on the corners of the streets.
He's mandatory holding his heat.
He survives the ones that are weak.
He has your cord and will pull it whenever he wants.
He rides around dressed in all black looking for prey.
He is ruthless and an atheist when it comes to religion.
He is the most smirkish of all.
He can't be trusted by anyone.
He wears a black beanie, black hoody, black jeans, black sneakers and a black ski mask
when on duty.
He doesn't care what anyone thinks or says of him.
People talk behind his back because they fear him.
If he can't get you he will go after the ones you love.
He hates to be disrespected
And he doesn't even know the meaning of respect.
He shows no mercy at all.
He is the grimiest of them all.
Even the ones that love him fear his rage.
He shows no sympathy.
He has a cold heart that is empty.
He believes the world has turned its back on him.
In his mind he is trapped and sees no way out.
He believes his life is all despair.
He has nothing to lose.
Why is he this way?
Some say he is crazy and insane.
Who is the grim reaper?
Any ninja who fits this script.

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ford dropping some knowledge on us Beat folks and Beat readers. You took it to a whole new level on this one. It's amazing because people see the Grim Reaper as a sort of mythical figure but the qualities we attach to him live in a lot of folks involved in the game. The stalking power, the determination and the cold detachment that allows the Grim Reaper to take lives with easy is eerily duplicated in folks in the street life . Scary to think that the story created to frighten the hell out of people is walking the streets of the Bay and other places in this country. Except the Grim Reaper wasn't killing out of choice, it was his duty and no one on this earth has an obligation or duty to take anyone's life. To be dehumanized to the point where remorse, anger and despair are just a part of living in the game, feelings that can be pushed to the side, is unacceptable. Because we are not machines and these things take their toll, whether we think so or not, whether we deal with them or not. Just as the physics tells us, what goes up must come down, all emotions that enter our body will come out in way or another, for better or worse.

Why Did You Tell On Me?

This is a story I gots to tell. This is a lesson that I learned about ninjas. No matter how long you know somebody they still will snitch on you. I'm saying I knew this ninja for hella long. We blew grapes everyday together. We even used to be on a knock on me next knock on you type program. I even spent the night at this ninja's house like it was my own. This guy was like my brother, put it like that. But this is how it went down.

One day I needed a half of grapes. So he let me use his line. We was in my scraper and we went to the east to get my shhh. So we came back to Berkeley and we had just hot some baggies from this other guy and we were on our way to go and bag the weed up. Soon as I made a stop at the corner we seen task force—they were three deep in the black car. They got behind us and pulled us over. The guy that I was with made it obvious that he tucked the baggies in his shorts pockets so when they jacked us they found the half of weed and they found the baggies.

They took us in to custody and played the good cop, bad cop role. They told me that my partner was on the other side telling on me so I might as well tell on him. But I knew they were just saying that to get me to talk. I got released out of custody because I was a minor and I wasn't on probation. He went to Rita for a few days and got bailed. But the court date for my case took about four months to come. The whole time this guy was in my face acting like my brother. He told me he didn't tell the police shhh.

When my court date came, my public defender let me see all the paper work. I saw the statement he wrote and he said the baggies were mine and he told them that I sell weed. I know the police were trying to cross us up and he fell for it and cracked under the pressure. I stopped messing with the guy when I found this out. But I learned a lesson from this. Your best friends can become your worst enemies. And don't trust no one to do what you have to do on your own.

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a good story – you provide all the right information to keep the reader informed and interested, which is hard to do when you are talking about a lot of different time periods in one piece. As for the story itself, it's a tough one. It's messed up that you lost a good friend and lost your trust in others because of the situation. But we think the real lesson in all of this is that you shouldn't have been selling grapes in the first place. It's not your friend's fault that you got locked up – it's yours. Now you can be mad and disappointed that someone who you had been close to for long betrayed you and didn't have the guts to tell you about to your face. We get that, but at the end of the day this is on you.

So Tired

The sight of my eyes is a constellation.
The feeling of my pain is my direction.
So much love built in my heart
As well as pain there we have "Life's Art."
I believe karma has envy towards me
Because of what a cycle brought.
By any consequence I want to run from karma.
I want to judge my life,
Follow the order in the heart -
That's why I speak my own advice.
Was told I'm too sensitive
Yet I'm strong, won't remain weak.
So that one day I will always live
But I will forever sleep.

- Lil' Mainly Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is much darker than your usual poems. It sounds like you are saying pain and sorrow are guiding you through life and there is nothing you can do about it. Yet the tricky thing about poems is that sometimes the reader takes out a totally different interpretation than the writer intended so excuse us if we are off base with this. That last line is especially powerful because it sounds like you think you are destined to be lost or in search of that something. You are a smart cat with a good heart – you control your destiny. The future lies in these moments so make it happen, whatever it may be (as long as its right you will find your way).

Stand Up

All my life is just a movie
I make to live off art of me.
Alone I accept.
Besides all I feel is need
Of what's left
And therefore I focus on being history.
Wishing to be more than a number
Hate the fact I never been with a father
It turned my life into hands of a mother.
What a cycle to return into.
But I will not use that as an excuse.
I never knew how to be a kid see
I learned what a man couldn't do,
Feeling a mirror part of me as I grew.
It turned my life into an abuse.
What I stand for is a leader of troops
With a notebook full of value
So far got my mirror father there's no need for you.

-Lil' Mainly Prince, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are far more than a number. Being a statistic at one time and living as one are two different things. We can tell that you are feeling like there are a lot of things missing from you life, from love to a father. But you are exactly right to say that you will not use this stuff as "an excuse." Too many people get caught up in everything that they don't have and everything that has gone wrong but if you live with this mentality you there will always be a reason not to try. Lots of people are out there struggling and sometimes in life you got to find a way to make it work.

Beauty In The Break Down

Come on take a step towards me
So you can figure me out
I've been hoping and praying
For a single way to show you
What I'm all about
And I know this is the only way
Of pleasing the crowd
But when this is over and done with
And we walk away
There should be no doubt
So let's get a little closer
Now you say that were all tied up
And wrapped around
In useless states of mind
But at the same time
We're still young
We have the time to realize
That we were wrong
Come on love
Run with me
Get the hell out of this town
So we can get a better feel for each other
I'll take you back to where you remember
How you used to just live your life
A little for me
Take the time to let it go
Step away and watch me grow
So lets get a little closer to now
You say that were all tied up
And wrapped around
In useless states of mind
But at the same time
We're young
We have the time to realize
We are wrong
You can stay if you want to
I'll write to you
And tell you
How you've always been so special
You can stay if you want to
And I'll try to keep you close to me.

-Noah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Getting out of you town is an excellent way to get to know someone, even getting to know yourself. Be careful though. Fantasy only lasts for so long. Can you picture yourself with this person in ten years?

Mad

We're so nice sitting very still
in these rooms
Where no one else can feel
the pain that breaks my heart
It's day
I'm not okay
Sunlight through my window
Let's me know I'm still alive
But why did I ever let you
inside
My heart
I'm such a fool
But now I'm dead
A gaping hole
Shot through my heart
A lost connection
From your poisoned heart
Shot from your tongue
You end my life
The hardest thing about dying
Is knowing that you will never
See the light of day
A gaping hole
Shot through my heart
A lost connection
From your poisoned heart
My head now spins
Admired we go
I tried so freakin' hard
But I can't picture more
The hardest thing about dying
Is knowing you'll never see
the light of day
You ripped my heart out
You tore my heart out
And now…

-Noah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Noah, you have a lot of anger inside towards this person. Unfortunately, many of us run into these kinds of people that just tear us apart, make us feel enormous amounts of pain. But our advice to you would be – move on. You're not dead. You're so young with a full long life ahead of you. You must forget about this person. If you go after with revenge, you will pay for it for the rest of your life. The heart heals, but a seriouscase will destroy more than one life. Peace. Keep your head up and stay focused on yourself. The best revenge is – simply moving on.

This Atmosphere Here

This is to everyone who thinks they know me
And the ninjas in here: y'all don't know me.
The only thing the staff may see is what they read on the computer.
I made a mistake as you can see
And the ninjas in here only go by what they see.
I'm not here to make friends
But I can see who is fake and who is real
All by how one carries themselves.
I'm not here to kiss the staff's a…
I'm here because of something I did wrong in the past.
I'm here because God makes everything happen for a reason.
I sit in my room and I think, read and do push-ups for time to go by.
Before I go to sleep I pray that God forgives me.
I pray that he looks out for my momma, dad, sisters and the rest of my family.
If you are wise you will learn from your mistakes.
If you don't then you will pay.
And it might not be this month or this year but one day.
Then it will be too late.
I don't like this place.
While some ninjas do like it here, walking around with a grin on their face.
But I accept the punishment God has given me.
I come to realize from the letters I get that things in the streets haven't changed.
I don't know about y'all but how I feel, man forget this game.
It ain't no game - it's cycle for the system.
If you don't listen or pay attention and think can't nobody tell you nothing
Soak this shhh up.
To me you ain't real.

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Harsh words but they held some power and truth to them. It is hard that so many people, from the staff to your fellow detainees, are sizing you up and making assumptions about you. But aren't you kind of doing the same thing, assuming that smiling faces aren't a mask for a deeper pain or that maybe a casual attitude is in fact just a coping mechanism? We agree that there are too many folks who see coming to jail as nothing and don't get that this is a chance to learn something and move on, as opposed to a temporary break from the game. But you also have to keep in mind that we all deal with stress and loss in different ways. At the end of the day you can't possibly know what's going through another person's head. Besides, you have bigger issues to deal with. You have a family that's waiting for you and a life to start to living.

My Sister's Words

I'm feeling grief right now because I just got a letter from my little sister. She is 9-years old. The letter made me want to cry because my little sister was telling me how she felt and that she misses me. She said she doesn't like it when I'm in here, it's not the same and she can't wait for me to get back.

My ex-girl also wrote me and she was keeping it real about what I need to do with my life. She was one of the realest girls I had because she kept it real. But man just to look at my sister's handwriting is like a shock to me - she knows how to write and spell. It hurts my heart because I can hear her voice in my head.

-Ford, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can tell from your piece that this really hurt. People always say that its not yelling and screaming that get to us, but instead when the people we love most are disappointed in us. You have some strong women in your life, who are all trying to help you. Sounds like your sister is really growing up and you want to be there to see that and help her through it. She needs her big brother to be home, and more importantly, she needs her big brother to start thinking that he is special as she thinks he is.

Freedom

When you are free you could do anything you want to do. Like when I got released, I spend the night with my mom and we had like a party and my mom told me to dance with a girl, just to have fun and now I have a girlfriend. Just like my brother Tommy.

-Lila' Tommy

From The Beat: Nice. Freedom is something that a lot of us don't really appreciate till it's gone. Stay free.

How Are You Feeling?

I'm feeling lost, confused, and damaged, because I don't know what else to do, but to think.

I'm feeling like I do not want to be locked up behind these walls. But it's nothing I can do about it, because what I did was wrong - I know it. But just at that point you can say that I did not care, or you can say that I just was not thinking about consequences. That could or would happen, if it takes place in what going on.

-Bryant

From The Beat: Well Bryant, you are thinking now aren't you. Think about what kind of choices that you are making and the consequences that you are suffering. This is how you develop maturity.

Stuck On Me

I had realized the game is playing me because I had been in and out of the Hall since I was in Inglewood, I moved to the Bay to get out of the game, it seems like the game is struck on me because of the people I be hanging around with. Stay out the game, it ain't worth it.

-Stuck

From The Beat: We changed your name because – well you know exactly why we had to change it. You carry the game with you in that name – it would follow you to Mars if you let it. What do you think makes you hold on to it, and to the people you hang around with? Thinking on that might help you get unstuck.

How Are You Feeling?

Well, in a sense I am feeling good, but I am really feeling bad.

I am in here, so that's the bad part, but it's a good experience. Knowing that I never want to come back to a place like this when I get out.

I am going to stay with my mom and get a job. That's the good part. I can't wait to get out and get a job and make my mom proud again.

-Lil' Webbie

From The Beat: Good for you. Glad to hear that this is your wake up call. Turn this darkness into light! You make us proud too to hear that you have a plan. What type of job do you want to get?

Trapped

I feel like when I'm at home some times I'm trapped in my own neighborhood. Trapped in a low class society with a big ego

-Chris

From The Beat: That's a recipe for disaster. Is there anything you can do about it?

Family First

My life is shady and crazy 'cause it's a lot of people who are hatin' on my squad cause we be gettin' our money and shinin' on 22's. But anyways, things are starting to get harder for me 'cause my mom isn't tryin' to help me no more.

She keeps telling me that, why do I need her now? But when I was out I was never even at the house to see what's going on with my family. I didn't even know my two lil' brothers was in jail in Fairfield. I was just bringin' just to show y'all that family comes first.

-Lil Turk

From The Beat: It's true what they say about blood being thicker than water. Do you think you and your mom will be able to work it out and give keep it together? In the first part of this piece you talk about the squad, in the second part you talk about family. In your heart of hearts though, what does it mean when you say that you family comes first? What would it take to bring you back with your family?

How Are You Feeling?

I'm feeling all right, but I'm feeling down. I ain't with my girl and on top of that I'm in the Hall. I'm missing my baby hella much, she means so much to me. Just seeing her face would make me feel better than I do now. To be able to talk to her and at least hug her, I would be happy. Right now I'm cool, I'm feeling down because I ain't with my baby.

-Luigi

From The Beat: Well, we hope you get your life together soon and can soon feel the embrace of your girlfriend. Be smart youngsta, 'casue your girl won't wait forever, especially if yo uare letting your friends and the streets dictate your life. From this point forward you must think before you react! Good luck Luigi.

I Feel

I feel like all this is a dream, because I got set up. The cops think I'm-a burglar just 'cause I got caught with a gun from the streets. And it turns out the gun was stolen from a house, and they tried to pin a burglary on me, sayin, I robbed the house.

I think the cops can't find the real criminals and they be goin' around arresting innocent people, just fo' the fun of it. But I ain't trippin cause I know I'm-a get out sooner or later.

All I know is, they just created another criminal and drug deala' 'cause I lost my new job and I missed hella days of school, there is no way I'm-a pass school, and I don't think I wanna get a new job cause I'm not feelin' it no more.

-Sohail

From The Beat: Give us a break - take some responsibility. You know that it's a crime to have a gun on you! Don't be a fool! If they can't prove that you robbed the house, then you won't be convicted for it. You are in the Hall because you had a gun on you. How are the police responsible for making you a criminal and/or drug dealer? Stop the BS! Get your life back together, or you will spend it blaming others for you mistakes, from behind bars for a long time.

The Missing Feeling

On the real, I'm missing my family,
including the back empty pockets
I can't even stack.
I'm missing the outs,
walking around like a soldier,
letting ninjas know what I'm about.
I'm missing girls and grapes,
so that I could enter a new world.
I miss havin' fun on the block
just being myself
wearing my own jeans off the shelf.
Playing the Game...

-Lewy

From The Beat: Sorry Lewy, we couldn't print the last part of your piece, due to the fact that you would only be hurting yourself. The Beat Within is a place to teach not hate or be the fool! Be smart, you lost your freedom because of the things you used to do. If you really want your freedom back, you're going to have to make some changes in your life – at least some compromises. Think about it before you make a mistake that could ruin the rest of your life.

Free Me

Man What's up, this Lil' Bugga, yeah I'm still up here and stressed out, ready to leave, anyway damn they got me and my brother in jail and I bet ninjas out there are hella happy that we both gone, man they need to stop playin and free me and my brother.

But they can't keep us too long though. But I'm about to let this one slide on ice. Rest in peace. Mezzy bow-wezzy

-Lil' Bugga

From The Beat: So when you get free, then what? We don't just want to see you free in the short term physical stuff, we want to see you mentally free of all the bullshhh that holds you back... and what would that b-s be, exactly? You tell us, and THEN slide on ice.

Untitled

It's amazing how this Lil' Asian
Can have so much persuasion
In so many occasions
It's a mess, though
How ninjas wanna
Just guess
The best of me
I'm-a be aggressive and show that my soul
Is here to impress my one and only Ness
Ninjas all know that he has the best
They don't call me MJ for nothing
I get ninjas high,
But as time flies by
I felt deep down inside
And memorize the fears and drop down and cry
But as the tears come rolling down my eyes
Only Ness knows the best
And tries to stop the cries and dries my eyes
Now my sun rises high into the sky
And I have no shame in his game
I still get stressed up in my chest
Thinking that I'm about to lose
But he tells me it's not true
'Cause I'm his one and only boo
My heart says yes
I truly love you
I came to that clue
For me to stick to him
Like glue
One day soon
I will be his wife
And enjoy the rest of my life
I will come with our first son
And now my life has just begun.

-MJ

From The Beat: MJ, your life will begin when you get it together. Don't forget that you are incarcerated and yo uare young. Get your priorities straight! Having a family doesn't guarantee happiness. If starting this family is what's most important to you, then you need to make this your priority when you are mature enough to handle such a life changing experience. Every time a situation arises, that makes you upset, think first. You have some great goals, don't let small problems prevent you from achieving them. Good luck with the next chapter of your life.

Young Money

Where I'm from they call me Momo, where we started two for ten now it's straight money. But I get money all day, just posted, not trippin' off what people say, just tryin to get it

Some sucka ninjas tryin' to get me but I'll be home soon.

RIP Germ, Scooter, Cell, Mikey

-Momo

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you lost so many people who cared about you. Straight up, the last four words of this piece show how the first 51 are leading you into danger. You know the ultimate price for that money...and it's too high!

Confined

I do feel I am somewhat confined, even when I'm not in a cell. I feel I'm trapped in the same corner the same friends, the same methods of survival: Sell this, sell that, rob him, rob her.

I'm confined to the same routine, wake up, got to school, sell a few bags, then go back to the hut to mess with something nice and firm, go to sleep, wake up go to my cousin's house, smoke on something...

-D-Boy

From The Beat: You started off this piece like you were trying to say something serious, about being trapped in a routine, but then it seems like your mind started to wander. Bringing you back to graf one – is that life you describe the one you want or expect to be living in ten, twenty years? Because a life without growth – now that's prison.

A Little Poem For The Soul

Looks change with time
And beauty is only skin deep
Rehearse this time
Everyday
When you wake up
And when you go to sleep
Understand that you're special
In some way
So don't lose hope
And praise the Lord every day.

-Dominique

From The Beat: We are all special in our own little way.

Trust and Respect

What's up with it man? This is Lil' Juanito comin' at you from this East Bay facility. Now keepin' it real is not just sayin' something just to hear yourself speak, you know. There's a lot of "real" foo's doin' time by stickin' to the street code. Now you see foo's that is sworn in this, to born in this and they mess everything up. Individuals put trust and respect into that when it's time to ride they in exchange can't even show loyalty. So check yo' sold homie, bow down to the solid, forever stayin' true.

"When they choose to ride, you can see it in the children's eyes, nobody gives a… about us." -Tupac

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: What' you're talking about here is integrity – the ability to live your word and stick to it. You're right to value integrity, but we just wonder if it's misplaced. Or rather, you're more focused on how bad it is to snitch than on how it is to do the things that people end up snitching about. Do you believe in honesty on all counts? Because that's part of integrity too.

Painful

I don't see why everyone wants to live so bad. But everybody is going to die one day. So I don't see why people want to live. That's why I don't care about dying. I just don't want to have a painful death.

-Big Joe

From The Beat: A painful death is rough, but a painful life would be worse. What do you mean when you say you don't see why people want to live? What are the things that give you personal joy?

Doing It My Way

What it do Beat? This is Lil' D. I'm back in the hall because I ran from my group home and caught another case for a stolo. I was driving man. I feel halla stupid 'cause I was tripping - I was hella high and didn't try to run. But now I'm gonna do my program in here and when I get out I'm gonna finish where I left off at, know that.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Now you shouldn't feel stupid period because we all make mistakes. But you should be upset with yourself because you ran from you group home and got caught up, not because you were too high to think to run. Here at the Beat we appreciate honesty and we hope you appreciate ours in return – if you think that this will be the last time you pay the price for your actions, be it jail or worse, you are wrong. No one gets to walk away from the game happy and free. Do your program but don't rush through it thinking that it can't teach you anything. You might be surprised to find you don't have all the answers at 17-years old.

Come On Beat!

Before I get started Beat, I want to extend my love to my loved ones and to all my homies, well by that out of the way, what's up Beat, once again this your boy Chucky here in max unit, pimpin' this shhh.

Today's topic is "Are you dying to live or just living to die? Hell nah, I ain't dying to live, is you? I mean everyone lives to die. We ain't going to live forever, but while I'm living I ain't dying to live. I know that for a fact. Just because I'm in this system don't mean I'm dying to live. Come on Beat.

Nowadays y'all come up with some putzy ass Beats. But today I went to court, they sending me to camp. In about one or two weeks. I'll let you know this. I'm a be another homeboy pimpin' that shhh, I ain't mad, I know when I get there I'ma pimp one month and go my hood . So now this homeboy gotta go

-Lil' Chucky

From The Beat: You are of our most loyal writers, so if you didn't like our question, so here's our challenge to you: Write a better one! We mean it, we bet you know far better than we ever could what the best topics are for your publication, and we mean it: It's your publication, you and every single one of the writers who keep it alive. So if you have question suggestions, we'd be honored to try 'em out. Mature up!

Longing For San Diego

I feel that I am trapped because I don't got no family no were else but San Diego and that's my dad's side and I don't mess with them because I don't really know my dad.

-Tommy

From The Beat: Some of us unfortunately don't have family around to help us. This only means that you must grow up very fast. Is there anyone that you look up to – that can be a positive role-model for you? You're only trapped if you allow yourself to be. How could you get to know your dad and that side of the family better?

I'm Out

What's up with it Beat? This is Lil' Phil coming form Oakland. I just wanted to write and tell y'all that I am out of the hall. I am going to camp in a couple of days and am going to PIMP it because I know it's easy.

I want to get out of the system and stay home. I am so happy that I am gonna cut so I am hit y'all later. Thanks for the help and keep it solid.

-Lil' Phil

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you are going into your program with the right attitude – do what you need to do, get out and start over. You sound so happy to be moving on and we are happy for you. Thank you for your contributions and keep your head up.

When I Get Out…

I'm going to go to the hut and blow my brains away smoking and drinking, hop right in my car and mob off and go to work.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: Aw come on! Where do you think that route will lead you? Right back here! Is that the cycle you want to fall into? You've written stuff for us before that makes us already know you are way smarter than this. So prove it, and give us a better plan for what to do when you get out.

Confess Your Sins

What's up Beat. This is Ismael. I just want to tell everyone to believe in God and to pray and to confess your sins to the Lord. He will forgive you if you believe in Him. So why you get out, stay out of trouble. And be good, because the Lord loves you, and he wants you to be good and follow his good way…and there will be bells.

-Ismael

From The Beat: Can you give us an example from your own life, about the way praying and looking to God has changed things for you?

How I Feel

I feel like you can't trust nobody — because my own patnas ain't solid! But I'm gon' let y'all know, all you ninjas talking about I'm washed, you need to hush y'all mouth, on the real, ninja. Ain't no secret I'm gon' beat my case! On mama's! And you know something else, I got family, boy.

-Wayne

From The Beat: Instead of claiming family, you need to see that the game is not what it's cracked up to be! You're surprised to find "you can't trust nobody" in the game, but it's always been the same — you just didn't know it. Change your game, 'cause the one you're playing is nothing but lies, death, jail and pain.

Playin' It Wrong

My prospective of the game is life. Life doesn't play me. I play it, but for the last few years I've been playing it wrong.

-Emmanuel

From The Beat: This is a straight tease, such a great opening, just like in a movie… and it makes us want to know how you've been playing it wrong, what happened, and then what's changing… but you stopped it. What happens next? Don't leave us hanging!

Playing The Game

I'm playin' the game — the game ain't playin' me! I'm doing what I got to do, and I stay solid 24/7, 365 days a year, you feel me?

I play the game swiftly. I'm a gangsta, keeping it gangsta. I stay putting it down wherever I'm at, whether I'm by myself or with the carnales. We some youngstas, putting it down, bangin' on everybody. We know how to bust and we don't trust no one else but us. You feel me?

But I play the game. The game don't play me. To all, you should do good and not get caught up doing stupid stuff; and keep your mind clean — 'cause no one should be incarcerated like me. So be safe. Alrato.

-Lil' Krayzie

From The Beat: What are you really teaching the little vatos with all that talking about busting guns and claiming to be savage young ones? The game has played you, for a fact — why else are you here in max? Keep thinking like this and you'll be banging in the "pin", doing your varrio not a bit of good in the end. If you want to help your varrio, get a job and bring home a salary. Show the little G's that's the way they need to be to live happy and free.

Paying the Price

Well, I'm Giggles from Newark, up in max, just letting this tiempo pass me by.

The topic today is how I'm feeling. To be real with y'all, I'm feeling all right, waiting for this last court date, then I'm heading to they "Y" — and I can't wait! 'Cause I'm tired of this little child-care!

But to be true with y'all, I'm tired of being locked up. I been spending most of my childhood in here, since I was a young teen — and now I'm 18 and I'm heading to the "Y." I feel that I did a lot of crap, and I'm now paying the price for the things I didn't get caught doing all that time.

But it's all good. I'm gon' sav' it out. This is gon' help me in the future, so I can learn from my mistakes. Well, with all this said — alratos vatos!

-Giggles

From The Beat: We have to say we agree with you about paying the price for all the things you didn't get caught for, but we can't say it makes us happy that you didn't learn your lesson the last time you were locked up. Man, we can't seem to get your homies to feel us about this stuff till it's too late — maybe you can. It's time for the vatos from the varrios to change their scenarios. Stay up, stay strong, and learn from what you did wrong.

What Do I Do Now?

What's up Beat and Beat readers? You know this that homeboy Lil' B from Hayward, just dropping a couple lines about this topic y'all gave us.

Well you asking me how am I feeling and I'm feeling cool just 'cause I'm gonna get released next week. The only bad thing is that I don't know what I'm gonna do when I get out. I'm 18 but that's all I got so until next time...

-Lil' B

From The Beat: B we know that your heart is still in the game and that you feel like you aren't ready to leave it. We also think that the reason you aren't ready to leave is because it's all you know and you can't imagine your life without it. But you never know anything until you try. We know there are things you thought you would never be able to do as a kid that you do now without thinking twice. Next time it won't be the halls and you will be entering a whole other world of regret.

How I'm Feelin'

What's up Beat and Beat readers? This ya boy OB'trice from Oakland. Man, how I'm feelin'? Well, I'm feeling bored as hell up in these closed walls and a window. I'm tired of dis same food every day — dat ain't cool!

But very soon, I will go to Camp. So I'll get a pass home to see my family and my wifey! So, sooner or later, I'll get out. Yaddamean? To all my fellow inmates locked up in the Hall, keep y'all heads up. Be safe. Yaddamean? Out!

-OB'trice

From The Beat: It is very cool that your conditions will be improved when you move from the Hall's max unit to Camp Sweeney. What's most important though is that you change your life so you never have to be locked up again. Yaddamean!

Love

Love is a strong feeling that a man and a woman feel when they have strong feelings for each other.

Love can hurt each person - you may argue with your lover and do things to get your lover really anger.

Love hurts really bad; it can get so bad tears will fall from your face. I know because I've experienced it.

Love can be on a positive side or a negative one. The positive side falls under the category that you buy your lover things that make you feel good and you feel proud about it.

I am in love with my beautiful Larly. Now I really love her and she loves me.

Love is a good thing to share so if you have feelings for that special person let them know so you can have someone by your side 24/7.

I'm out late.

-Billy

From The Beat: We agree – love is complicated, messy, beautiful, heart breaking and so much more. Love can be our friend or enemy; our protector or tormentor; a crutch or the thing that knocks us over. Love between two people (and who those people are isn't of much concern) can be expressed in many ways, and buying the person you love something nice is sweet but possessions don't prove how much you love someone. It is obvious that this young lady is very special to you, which is something to cherish. However, we just want to remind you that you are so DON'T rush things. You are young, whether you feel like it or not.

I Got Game

I have a chance to give my heart to the game
but tell a girl how this game is
like this sec I really don't need you I got game
and I'm not lame but I'm in the game
getting this is my thang.

-Lil' Maine

From The Beat: We need more lines from you than just this little rhyme to find out how much game you have. Bring it on next week!

My Struggle

man i lay in my cell
i think why in the hell
am i in here
i'm not a criminal
i don't need to be here
so this is my struggle
in life — i'm not
an adult nor am i a kid
i'm a person that
only has one fear
my mind was foggy
but now it's clear
but i still wonder
why i'm here
nothing to do
nothing to see
as i lay in my bed
trying to find out
what i can be
this is my struggle
as you can see
one day i'll be out
and my struggle will be
free — yaddamean

-OB'trice

From The Beat: It's confusing because you really started losing long before you got caught. Getting over on someone is what you got taught and is what you always thought was the way to succeed and to meet your needs. Now you need to see exactly where a criminal mentality really leads — the penitentiary or death. So when you're free, give that old life a rest and do your best to get and keep a j-o-b. Make money legally and stay free.

Trash Talk

This young Kev B, you know, from Oakland. These ninjas up here in Camp talking trash, but I ain't listening. And I want to say to all locked, keep yo' head up. And to all those that's gone to rest in peace, you have my love eternally.

-Kev

From The Beat: If you're really not listening, you won't even have to say anything back. There are enough ways to mess up at Camp without stirring up turf rivalries. (Along those lines: we took all turf calls out of your piece, which includes shout-out's and RIP's).

It's Not My Time Yet

Well the game is not playing me. I just think I'm playing the game because when I'm out I follow my own rules.

Right now the game is playing me because I'm in jail. But when I get out and off of probation I will be playing the game to the fullest and always be working. But you have to watch out for a lot for people. Folks be waitin' to take what you got so I suggest that you stay away from the game stuff. I ain't gonna lie, it's hard to stay away from it. I just can't seem to stay away.

I'm going to go right back to it when I get out so I guess the game will be playin me till I get out and stay off the block. Till then I will be ahead of the game.

-Quail

From The Beat: First off the game is playing you because you are locked up. Following your own rules lost you your freedom. And if you think that by playing smarter or quicker you will get away with more you couldn't be more wrong. If a certain path keeps bringing you to the same place then it's time to find a new path, not think about how to make the path better. We respect the fact to tell people to stay away, even though it's hard and you can't seem to do it. But if the guy to the left of you can do it and the guy to the right of you can do it, then why can't you? It's not that you can't, it's because you don't want to. You don't want to put in the work and make the sacrifice to give you and your future a real shot at success. As we have told you before, you are too smart for this crap. We expect more from you and it's about time you started taking your own advice and started expecting more from yourself.

I Am Playing The Game

To me right now I am playing the game. The reason why I think I'm playing the game because I spend more time out of Jail.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Spending any time in jail, be it long or short, often or rarely, is not okay! So we aren't buying it. We think you're getting played; not because you are in the halls but because your mentality.

I Miss Being With You

If I was with you right now, I don't know what I would do to you. Baby, I think about you every night, and I can't help it. You just keep getting on my mind. I know when I get out, you will be waiting for me.

-Lil' Webbie

From The Beat: Do her a favor though, and when you get out, don't just go back to what you used to do, 'cause it's no good for her or you to get caught up doing time again. Change the game you're playing, young friend, and your love need never end.

My Life: How I'm Feelin'

i'm feeling pretty good
but i have to go back to court
the second of may
i might go to camp or a group home
so it's coo' that i'm not going to y a
for this pistol case
i got messing around the block
but i'm not trippin'
because be around me
and you bound to get shot
but don't worry
'cause if you my ninja
don't worry 'bout me
pullin' that trigga
i post up
just to make a buck
every day go by with tough luck
i'm livin' —
but mostly i try hard
to not live life without killin'
i be glad to wake up every morning
knowing i'm okay
but when i get out
me and my girl gon' always
be smokin' on hay
living in rudsdale
in the future when life end
for me it's good

-Tlj

From The Beat: Your mind got lost to the grind, and you're still blind to what you need to see very, very clearly — you cannot go back to the life you were living or you're wasting this chance the judge is giving you to live in the free world. Build a better future for you and your girl — at least give it a try before you die. Life can be good if you can rise above crime in the 'hood.

I Played the Game

The game didn't play me
I played the game
I'm still playing it
Tryin'a maintain
But something else came up
And I got framed
And got snitched on by somebody
Who did the same
So now I'm in camp
But I'm still amped
I ain't gon' let my style get cramped

-Lil' Anonymous

From The Beat: You still don't get it. Snitching is part of the game, always has been and always will be. It's just one of the many unforeseen ways the game plays its players. You need to change your game, get up off the street and get a j-o-b (not to mention your high school diploma or GED).

True Love

Baby you know who you is.
So girl don't play
You got them big lips
And a little bit of cake.
I'm gone keep it lit for my bra TKO
And you gone to be my girl to the day I got to go.
I don't mean leave you I mean when I die.
If you really love me baby girl be my wife.

-Dre

From The Beat: So we like this poem for its simplicity and it's fun. We believe that you don't have to be super-mushy to get across how you feel about someone but we are missing a little something from this piece. Not everything has to be deep and meaningful but if you are really trying to communicate strong feelings to this young lady, it doesn't come across.

Just A Few Words

Dear Beat,

This is Lil' Neph. I don't have much time so I just wanted to say to all you people that are in here, keep your head up and do the right thing for you're not the next ninja. Don't dive up and if you should fall, get up and keep on doing you. I'm out.

-Lil' Neph

From The Beat: We like that last line cause we are all going to stumble at one point or another but what separates us is what we do when we are down.

Time To Get It Together

How am I feeling? I feel like it's time to get myself together. You feel me? I got a son on the way, and it's time for me to get my life together.

When you have a little one on the way, that's when life hits you. Life ain't no game. If you think it is — then get a girl pregnant, take care of her and y'all baby! If you think you a man, move out yo' mom's house.

I gotta give a shout out to all, stay strong and pimp that program; don't let that program pimp you!

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: Never forget where you came from, but now that you have a son on the way, it's time to rise above yesterday. Quit mobbin' — get a job and show the world how a man does right by his baby and his girl. Use this time at Camp to help yourself, get involved in all the programs you can — can you get in that GED class? Ask! (And keep asking, if that's what it takes.)

A Small Glimpse Into My Life

One day the game did have me.
I felt that there was no turning back.
I felt that I got to do this and that's there is nothing else I could do.
It's like I had to rob people to get through life.
Sometimes I did it to get what I wanted
so that's a lil' part of my story.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: Do you feel like the game still has you? There are times in life where we feel backed into corners, and it is in these moments that it doesn't matter whether or not we put ourselves in those corners or not; all that matters is that we feel trapped and powerless. But that's what you have to realize and hold onto – you have control over your actions and decisions. The game had you because you wanted it to. The real question is so now what?

How I'm Feeling

Man! Right now, man, I'm at Camp Sweeney, man — and I'm stressing! I'm just trying to get out of Camp and get on with my life. All right then, y'all stay safe and watch out for them cans of pepper spray.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: You can't just go back to the block if you want to go on with your life, 'cause that's not going to bring you anything but street strife and more time. What's your plan, man?

Welcome To The World Baby Sister

I just want to let everybody know that I got a little sister. My mom just had her on March 29, 2006. I just want to say it to the inside world.

-A big brother

From The Beat: Congratulations on the new sister. We hope you are able to join her on the outs soon.

Play The Game Right

Man, the game ain't playing you, if you know how to play the game right! It's like a video game: if you don't overcome certain obstacles, den you gonna lose.

I used to play the game. Now when I get out — This Friday from Camp! — I'm gonna play the game right. Ya know? Some thangs ain't always gonna be there, so, you know, just move on to betta thangs. The game is life — and it all depends on how you wanna play. Don't let it play you. Me, I go dumb like yeeee!

-Big Chris

From The Beat: Leave the street game behind so you can win in the game of life — you got that right! Then go dumb like someone who sees there's a time to "go dumb like yeeee" and a time to take life seriously. You know, have fun but stay free!

Haven't Made Enough Money To Quit The Game

For me I don't know when I'm going to quit the game but I know it will not be anytime soon. I won't stop till I am a millionaire. Maybe I can hit links 'till I succeed and get what I came for.

It started when I was born. My father never did nothing for me; he had the money and he was a big hustler.

My mom moved without him and around seven I started seeing money. I wanted it so that's how I started.

-Anthony

From The Beat: So what if you get the million dollars? Will that be enough? What if you get 8 million dollars, will that be enough? People often forget that greed, like other drugs, cannot be easily contained and has a power over you that you don't understand. Often people are not in control of their lives, their lust for money is and we think you deserve more than that. We think you deserve a better life than that. And believe us that money won't be coming with you if you are being buried.

Supposed-To-Be Family In the Game

Man, it's a lot more than the game — it's a supposed-to-be family member that got me in here by lying on me! All because he messed part of his life up.

Everything got me feeling like I can't do anything. Looking at the walls, barely seeing nothing but the same ol' people day after day. It's like I'm trapped with no way out!

I feel like I'm being played, all in one big raid. I feel like I got one place to stay. At least I'm still in the Bay.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Your story about a someone lying on you 'cause something happened to them — is all about the game! That is the essence of the game! You believed all that talk, and now the game has walked all over you. Don't be a fool: Time to change your game, 'cause the old game is not cool.

My father never did nothing for me; he had the money and he was a big hustler.

Cool Up Here At Camp

I'm feeling cool up here at Camp Sweeney — just walked twenty-five miles! Feet killing me!

But over all, jus' trying to get these six lil' months out the way to get home to the family and my wife. Feel me? Get a cool lil' job, get that legal money!

But yeah, I'm out. See you in The Beat another time.

-Lil' Quesada

From The Beat: Major props! Not only on finishing that twenty-five mile hike in good spirits but also on your game plan for living life after leaving Camp — employed, free and back with your family!

Lil' E And The Game of Life

You know this that young ninja, LiL' E. You know I'm playing the game of life and the dope game. You know there's no rules in this life style, and I'm making the moves in this life style by the choices I make.

But at the same time, I ain't gonna say I got control over the rules of the game — 'cause anything can happen to me at any time: death or jail. So I ain't gon' say that I'm forced to listen to rules by someone else, but I do listen to my OG's on the block.

I'm in control of my own game 'cause I'm my own man. You win the game by staying out and staying alive.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: But there are rules in the game of life, and one of the rules is: keep playing the dope game and it won't end nice. You admit you could die or go back to jail at any time, and the truth is, young friend — it's not a matter of "if" but of "when". Or, you could grow up at last, quit being a D-boy on the fast track to disaster. Since you're your own man, change your game plan.

Followers...

For example, the way we listen to the game is for the big homies—we fight other sets and shoot up other sets. I mean, the homies want us to fight, then when you see the people yo' big homies wanted you to fight, then they talk shhh! Then now you want to fight them, you feel that yo' big homies is right, because they told you to fight. Now they got guns — nowadays you got to shoot them or get shot!

-Delvon B1

From The Beat: We titled this "Followers" because it seems that's all you're doing — letting someone else direct your actions, as if you had no independent ability to reason for yourself! We definitely do not accept your conclusion that "you got to shot them or get shot!" We know too many young people who simply refuse to put themselves in that situation, so we know the "shoot or be shot" excuse is just that — an excuse for choices you make. Why are you risking your precious life for anybody else's gratification? If you had the courage to be a leader instead of a follower, you might be able to lead yourself out of this locked facility, and provide a desperately needed role model to all those youngsters who look up to you for guidance.

My Mom Run Me

Well, my mom run me. She tell me what to do. She tell me to go to school or not to go to school. She tell me what to eat. She tell me what not to eat. She buy my clothes.

But when I get sixteen or seventeen, I will run myself. I'll have a car. I'll come in when I want to, smoke if I want to. Life is good when you make it good. Stay out of trouble.

-Kenyon B1

From The Beat: We hope you spend some time reflecting on the last line of your piece: "Stay out of trouble." We just want to remind you that your mom is not running your show at the moment, the hall staff is. They're telling you what to wear, when to go to the bathroom, when to talk, etc. So if, by running yourself, you mean that you will be able to do those things that lead young people to lock-up, then you'll soon be giving up your freedom once again. Think hard about it before you go down that road.

A Time Out

Yeah, what's up wit' Tha Beat? Man, yo' young ninja, Junk, is back in this shhh, but yeah, man, I'm in dis hole doin' a time out.

Man, you know me — I'm still on da block doin' what I do best. But, yeah, I'm goin' be off probation in July, off paper work, so you know I'm about to do it--bigger things. But the only thing I'm really tryin' a do is stay out da halls, so I see you bees when I see you.

-Lil' Junk B1

From The Beat: If you're doing what you do best on the block, and your "best" keeps leading you to this slave-like existence, then isn't time to find some other activity that you do better than best? You say you're "still on da block" but we can clearly see that the only block you're on is the corridor in B1 where your cell is... Wake up, Lil' Junk. You're dreaming.

Broken Families

This game we play is hard for these young black brothers nowadays, because we all want to be rich. In this white man's world, we all get treated like shhh and we all do these things because our moms be crackheads and dope fiends, they have AIDS, HIV, STDs, and some in jail. We got to be grown on our own. And some of us be born on the streets.

-Delvante B1

From The Beat: We feel for you in this piece, Delvante, because we know too many families that are broken in the way you describe. Yes, it's unfair that you have to be your own parents and provide for yourself. But if you don't find a better way to do that, then the system finds a way to provide for you, telling you what to eat, where to sleep, when to shower (and who to shower with), and whose clothes to wear. There's got to be another way.

Manipulated By Older Men

I think whatever you do, it is your decision. It's things that people try to peer pressure you, but it's up to you to make the good or bad decision. The first time I felt like somebody made me do something was when I went to juvenile hall (YGC). A lot of young black men been manipulated from older men, but I don't trust you if you ain't family.

-Samra B1

From The Beat: You're right, older men often manipulate youngsters into doing their dirt for them. But you're also right that each of us must take responsibility for our own decisions. How will you be a better role model for the young ones who look up to you than the OGs were to you?

Vice-Versa

You are playing the game, but at the same time, the game is playing us, because this game has already been played before our time. None of my big homies told me to do anything. I don't let nobody control my mind. I have some big homies that tell me, "Vern, why you keep catting off?" Look at me now—in the halls!

-Money Earnin' Vernon B1

From The Beat: We see some contradictions here, Vernon. You say that you inherited the game from generations past, but you also say no one told you to do anything, that you make your own decisions. How can you be handed something that somebody else created and claim that your decisions come from no one but you? If you are down for "the game," then you are playing yourself, and sooner or later you will wake up to that fact. We only hope it is sooner, and not later.

I Run My Life

I run my life. I control every decision and move I make in my life. If I were to get myself into something that I don't want myself to be in, either way it was my decision to make from the beginning.

Let's say if I were to be in a gang, I was the one that decided to join it. I was the one who agreed to do what I did. And now I have to handle the consequences.

Life is what you make it and when you mess up, you have to deal with it.

-Dominick B1

From The Beat: You're certainly right, Dominick, that you have to accept the responsibility for your own choices. But we know that every decision we make comes from a variety of sources, from what we believe to what our parents tell us to the pressure we feel from our peers. So when you say you control every decision and move you make, we have to ask how you came to think the way you think, to act the way you act, to live the way you live? We admire the fact that you see that you have messed up. Now, do you have a vision of how to go forward without messing up again — or do you think you can outsmart the system?

I Miss The Outs

I miss being at home with my family. I miss sleeping on my own bed instead of some group home or a stanky hall mattress. I miss kickin' it with tha homies, poppin' pills, smokin' Barney, and drankin' 1800 Patron. I miss beatin' some shhh up.

For about a year all I've had is nothing but memories that I reminisce over almost every night. I've been held back from going back home, because of the decisions that I made while being in group homes.

Now I'm waiting to go to another placement and I continue to see people beat their cases and go back home. In my head I tell myself how lucky they are. But I know that one day I'll return to my house with my family.

-Lil' Spitz B1

From The Beat: You know, Lil' Spitz, returning to your house and family really requires nothing from you but a little time. Far more important is figuring out how to stay at home with your family once you get there. If you are reminiscing about poppin' pills, smokin' purple and getting drunk, all you are doing is setting yourself up for a return visit here! Why not use the time the system has forced on you to make a plan for success — a plan that includes going to school and staying away from the drama of the streets and the temptations of drugs and alcohol which are certain to give you a return ticket! But then, maybe you don't hate it here as much as you say you do...

I Do What I Want

I run my own life. I make my own decisions. If I wanna get high, I get high. When I wanna scratch myself, I scratch myself. My mom don't run shhh, 'cause when I wanna read, I read on da real. But my mom give me money to buy clothes sometimes, that's it!

-Jeffrey B1

From The Beat: Those decisions you claim to make on your own have led you right here, where some stranger tells you when and where to scratch yourself, what to eat, when to sleep, who to shower with, what to wear, etc. etc. So we're not that impressed by the decisions you claim to have made on your own. If you're running your own life, then you'd better find a way to run in the other direction, 'cause where you've allowed the system to put you strips you of all decision-making. Time for a change...

Gettin' Played

I think the game is playing me, 'cause the game got me locked up. I wouldn't never be in here if the block wasn't there. If the block wasn't there or the people on the block wasn't there, I wouldn't be locked up.

But once you are in the game, it's hard to get out, 'cause people might think you are a sucka and people might think you are still in the game, even though you got out 'cause of some of the stuff you did when you was in the game. So that why it's hard to get out the game.

-Young Jimmy B1

From The Beat: You're right, Jimmy. It is hard to get out of the game. But is living in lock-up easy? That's the consequences of the game (assuming you don't endure even worse ones, like getting shot and losing your ability to walk, or to see... or to live), so you are faced with only hard choices. The question is, do you have the courage to make the truly hard choice to get out of the game now so that you won't have to make the even harder choices later on down the line — choices that you might have to make from behind four thick walls, razor ribbon and gun-toting guards...

Both Bad And Good

I feel that being in YGC is a bad thing, but being in there is a good thing. The bad is doing the crime; the good thing is when you be in your room, it give you time to reflect.

-YSB B1

From The Beat: If you are truly using your time to reflect, then that's very good. What are you reflecting about? What do your reflections make you want to change about how you you're your life?

Here For Fighting

I'm feeling like I just want to get out of here and I don't want to come back here ever again. I wanna just go back to school. Hopefully I get out on Monday, April 17, 2006. I just wanna go home and see my great grandmother and my family because I barely go out. The only thing I'm in here for is having a fight in school at Luther Burbank.

I think the game is nothing to play because you can't win. Maybe for a little while, but pretty soon it'll catch up with you.

-Darryl B2

From The Beat: It sounds pretty shady to us that you are locked up just for a fight — even though we know there are better ways to solve your problems than fighting. We think with your commitment to the goals you've set for yourself (getting back to school, making quality time with your grandmother and family) make your future look good. We'd like you to add one more, though: Stay out of fights!

Lock Up Runs In The Family

W'at it do? This Young Drewski. I'm writing to The Beat tonight about getting locked up. I don't think that is something that people should have to go through.

I haven't seen my dad in a couple of years, because he was always getting locked up throughout his life. Basically, what I'm trying to say is that my dad turned out to be a jailbird. My dad has been through the system. He's been to juvenile hall, group homes, all the way to prison.

I got out of my group home, but I got locked up again. Before I got locked up, I was waiting for my dad to get out. My dad just got out the pen yesterday, but I'm not going to see him, because I got locked up and now I got to wait for about another year and a half, maybe even two years, just to see my dad. It's been about three and a half, four years since the last time I seen him. I don't think I'm going to even see him when I get out, because he's probably going to do something stupid again, and get locked back up, so I don't even think I am going to even get a chance to see him when I get out. I won't see him for probably another three to four years if he messed up.

I hope he doesn't mess up anymore and just stays out, because he been going in and out of jail, all of his life. I hope that I don't mess up like he did and have to be coming in and out of jail all my life and become a jailbird. Going to jail is in my veins.

-Young Drewski B1

From The Beat: So you and your dad are playing prison leap-frog, and by doing that, you're preventing each other from uniting like a family. What a tragedy! We can't say anything about your father (except that it appears he doesn't learn his lessons), and you, too, cannot control what he does. All you can control is what you do. Going to jail is not in your veins. Nobody is born with jail in their blood. Doing those things that lead to jail is something you may have grown up with, but that doesn't mean it's "in your blood." If that was true, you would have no control over your decisions, and that would relieve you of all responsibility. But you are responsible for choices that lead you to jail (just as you are responsible for choices that lead you to college...) Why not use your excellent brain to create a life for yourself doesn't continually threaten your freedom?

How Can I Maintain When I'm Out?

Okay, I handle myself outside of YGC by doing, just doing, the basic, like going to school, doing what I need to do, being on time to my meetings, listening to my moms, going to an after school program, and work. I keep myself busy an' just maintain out there. All you need is to be occupied — that's "all that"— the key word.

-Lil' Pat B1

From The Beat: If you do all these positive things (which we think are great), how did you end up in here? Did you forget one of the elements of your plan?

The Game Is Playing Me

At this point in life the game been playing me and I been a piece to be played. After you get played so much and took off the board it's time to realize that you can't be in the game. It's time to be the player who move the pieces of the game around so that you win.

I've been played by the authority and laws. Every time I lose the game I come to juvenile hall. But I'm gone play the game and win that shhh for real.

-Young Reese B2

From The Beat: We thought at first that you really understood something profound, which is that the only way to "win the game" is not to play it in the first place. But then you ended your piece by committing yourself to continuing the game, hoping this time you'll win. You won't, Young Reese. The "game" you can win at is school, career, family, love — but that's only if you find a way to stay out of places like this!

I Warned Him

When I was home, I told my friend not to hang out with that boy that snitch on people. When he didn't listen, I told him, "If you get caught, I told you, 'Don't hang with him,'"

He did something bad with the boy and he snitched. I seen my friend in YGC and I said, "What happened?" He said, "That boy you told me not to hang out with snitched on me and brung the police to my house and they brung me to YGC."

I never dealt with a snitch. Snitching is bad. When you see the people who snitch on you, you want to do some bad to him and when you do some bad to him, you end up in YGC or the Y. I don't deal with snitches. That me.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: The problem with your decision not to hang out with snitches is that you don't always know who will become a snitch and who won't. Sometimes those that you trust the most will roll on you if the cops have enough to hold over their heads to pressure them. So, the best advice isn't to avoid snitches; the best advice is to avoid doing anything that a snitch could get you in trouble for. It's not the snitch that put you here, it's your own choices...

How I'm Feeling

I feel like my life is being made fun of by the people who are keeping me in the halls for some shhh I did hella long ago. I been here for 90 days and in that time my friend got killed, big bro turned 18, my other brother just got out the pen, and my ninjas is messing up out there without me. So I feel that I'm in need because when I was out I was always running shhh and got respect from everyone who gave it. Also, I feel that when I get out I need to change so that I can be at my brothers birthday or at the parties that be jumping off.

When I'm in my room I feel like I'm a beast in a cage called a cell but it's more like a box that you would keep a killer in or something. Why would someone be kept in a place like this for something that happened so long ago? I think it's because it's people out there that don't want us Blacks and Hispanics to be something in life but fallers. The thing about me is that I'm going to always be on top and if I fall off then I'll be back quicker than you can eat a apple.

-Ques B2

From The Beat: We don't know what you did "hella long ago," but the one lesson you can draw from this experience is that there are consequences for everything — even if they don't fall immediately. We know it must be painful and frustrating to have your freedom controlled by strangers, but we can see some silver linings too, like the fact that you understand that you need to change your act on the outs if you want to spend time with your family and make a life for yourself. We agree that racism plays a role in where you and other Black and Hispanic young people end up, but we think there's more to it than that. After all, there are also Asian and white kids who are locked up. We think it's young people in general who pay the biggest price for the fears that adults bring to the table, and that we adults just keep doing things in the same old way even when we know that other ways would be much more effective. (California's juvenile halls and California Youth Authority have some of the worst statistics in the country for repeat crime, and yet they keep doing the same old thing — and, of course, too many of the kids keep doing the same old thing too, which only keeps putting money in the same old pockets...)

Why Me?

I'm a fool, a screw up, 'cause I'm locked up. Hell, why me? Why did I have to, just had to, get locked up? My life is not good up in here, but when I get out I will go to school an' get my life right. Damn, it's going to be hard, but I'm going to try.

Why do we young kids
Make life so hard an' sell crack
Why we can't just get a job
An' work, an' feed our families
Why we can't just do that?

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: You screwed up, Man Man, but that doesn't make you a fool or a permanent "screw up." In fact, from your determination to flip the script, we're sure you are not a fool, but a young man in a different path. We wish you all the luck in the world, knowing that it is much more your determination to get your life right that will determine your future than any amount of luck.

Feeling Bad For Being Here

I want to get out and do good in my group home for three months. I can get out by summer and hopefully get a job and a car. I don't feel good because I'm here.

-D-Swoff B1

From The Beat: We admire the goals you have set for yourself. What kind of job do you want to get? What about going to school?

Still Locked Up

You are still locked up when you get out because you are on probation, and you still have conditions you have to follow. You are still on a leash. You can't do what you got to do, have fun the way you want to do.

I have been coming to jail fo' three years — make that four years. I don't think I'm ever going to get out of the system. I'm about to have a birthday on 4/25/06. Hopefully, I will be out of here.

My cousin is locked up and I ain't talking about no case, I am talking about a casket fo' life. I will never see him again.

-Money Earnin' Vernon B1

From The Beat: Is being on probation with conditions the only thing that keeps you "locked up" when you're not in here? It seems to us that your idea of having fun also keeps you locked up, because your "fun" gives the system power to do what it is doing to you right now. If you don't ever get out of the system, as you fear, it will be because you have made choices that put you here. You are definitely smart enough to make different choices — and to know what those different choices are. We're sorry about your cousin's passing, MEV, and we hope it makes you think long and hard about what you want in your own future...

How I'm Feeling

I'm feeling cool, hanging in there, just waiting to my date come, so I can get out of there an' continue doing w'at I was doing an' just maintaining out there in the society.

-Lil' Pat B1

From The Beat: But what were you doing "out there in the society" that you're going to continue doing? If you continue doing whatever it was that caused you to lose your freedom, then you should start planning on a return trip... If, on the other hand, you know exactly what you have to not do any more, then your future will be a lot brighter...

Why I'm Mad

I feel mad because I can't eat what I want to eat. You're always locked up in your room and you always bored. If you bang on the door you will get DRB (disciplinary review board) — you stay in yo' room for three days.

When I get out into what will make me not come back is to go to school.

-Delvanta B1

From The Beat: The way to avoid DRBs is not to get locked up in the first place. And the way to not get locked up in the first place is, like you said, to go to school!

Think Now, Don't Pay Later

What it do Beat? This Young Jeff. Yeah, I'm feeling real good right now 'cause I'm getting out next Tuesday, April 18th so I'm juiced. But I'm trippin' right now 'cause I don't know what to do, either stay at the placement or run.

Basically I'm confused 'cause every placement I've been to I ran 'cause I just want to be out so bad. It's a lot of people be telling me it ain't nothin' out there on them streets, but I continue to do stupid stuff. It's like I'll call the homies or something' like, "What you doin'?" They'll be like, "It's crackin'" and I'll just run. I don't' know why. I just don't think about it at that moment — but as you can tell stupidity have gotten me in here 12 times.

-Young Jeff B2

From The Beat: If your problem is that you "just don't think about it at that moment," then don't wait for "that moment" to start thinking. Start thinking now! In fact, it's clear to us that you are thinking now, but we're a little confused by your confusion. If you've run from every placement, and if every time you've run you end up being taken from those that love you and put back in the box taking orders from a bunch of strangers, then you already know where running leads you. The choice you have to make is not between placement or freedom. The choice is staying in placement or getting your ass locked up. So what's your confusion about?

How Are You Feeling?

At first I felt bad but good at the same time. Bad because they made a mistake and now I'm here at YGC. Good 'cause I thought I was gettin' out and I get back to what I was doing. Now other than feelin' good or bad, I feel I don't care no more.

The reason why is 'cause I know I'm not gettin' out for a minute, so I don't feel bad or good about nothin' anymore. I feel nothing now 'cause I thought I was going to get out in time to take over my boss's program so that I have somethin' set for myself. But now I'ma do so much time that I can't do that no more. So now I don't give a damn what happens.

It's like my life now is to be here and doin' what I'm doin' 'cause when I'm out I'm not gonna be used to the outside world 'cause I'm used to bein' in here. I feel that this life is against you (me) because they judge you for what someone else is saying.

My theory is that anybody can say anything, so just because I look like someone doesn't mean that it's me or that I did whatever they're accusin' me for.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: You're right for feeling like you shouldn't be accused for something if you didn't do it (even though you didn't actually say you didn't do it...). However, what good will not caring do? And we don't even buy the fact that you don't care in the first place. But let's just say you don't, how will that be beneficial to you? Instead of saying that you don't care, why not take a little time to tell us what you really do care about?

Yeah, I'm Back

I'm back for some bs. I was going to Y-Tec but I was messing up getting dirty pee test, not in for curfew, and not really going to school. I was on the run for a few months, but I got wrapped for some dumb-ass shhh. I pulled a plastic thing out of a phone booth when I was on my way to my girl house.

A narc asked me did I want to go to jail and I said hell no. Then he said you destroying my area, and I said, "Leave me alone before I throw this at you," and he said, "Do it!" So I acted like I was going to and he got scared. Then I said that's why I scared you. The narcs came out of nowhere and threw me on the ground and took me to YGC. That's the end.

-Matthew B2

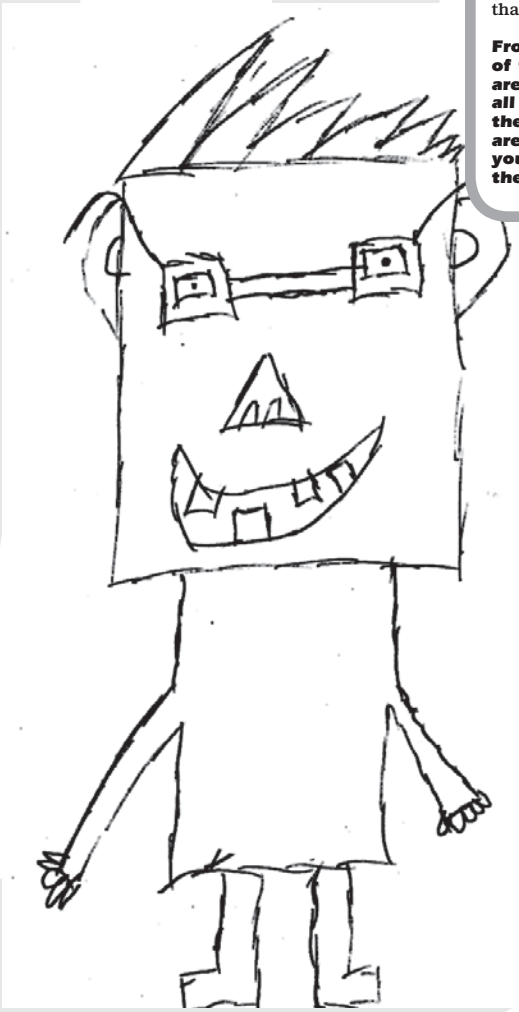
From The Beat: So let's get this straight. You were in a drug program where you continued to use drugs, you had a curfew that you couldn't follow, you were cutting school, you were on the run for months, you threatened a police officer with bodily harm — and you call all of this bs? Sorry, we can't agree. We're not saying that being put in a cage and giving up your freedom to a bunch of strangers is necessarily the answer, but we are saying that there are consequences to everything. So, what do you think the appropriate consequences should be for your behavior? Or, do you think that you have no responsibility for your current situation? If you don't like it here, then you'd better find ways to stop acting the fool, to stop doing what you call "dumb-ass shhh." On the other hand, if you do like it here, just keep on doing what you're doing...

Bunch Of Crap

A way that I feel locked up is because I'm going to have to go to a group home or I can get out of here, but with limited time outside which is about until six o'clock and I'll have to be on probation for about one year up to three years which is a bunch of crap just like my mom said.

-Michael B2

From The Beat: Well, it may be a bunch of crap, Michael, but that doesn't mean you can get away with violating those conditions. Yes, that is kind of a trap, but the only way out is to do the "program" and avoid situations that can put you back in the box. You never mentioned what put you in this predicament in the first place. Do you have any responsibility for where you are and what you have to endure?



How Are You Feeling

W'at's up with The Beat? This your boy J-Gutta and y'all wanna know how I feel. I feel like punching somebody in the voice box. I know it will probably get me more time, but who cares? I'm stuck up in here for dummy-ass long, so might as well go bad on ninjas.

Well Beat, I'm out.

-De'Aries B5

From The Beat: We cut some of your piece, yet we're not sure exactly what your two thumbs are up, but if you're "balling like a man" which sends you to this place or the slave camps they have waiting for you down the line, then we'd like to remain children... If your finger is on the trigger, it's because you keep it in your pocket where that money isn't! Plus, we don't really believe that you don't care if you get more time or not, 'cause if you really don't care, you're writing your own future, and it will be under the tight control of strangers.

The Game

The game is the same over and over again, which is slanging dope, weed and a few pills. But no one ever feels to make you ill, until you get sick tryna overdose and tryna look cute in front of a little baby girl.

But it ain't even about that. It's about the game. To be for real real, these

Little-ass girls and boys think they in the game, but the game playin' them. To me the way I see it, you ain't in the game unless you got lots of cars, money, girls, and no ninja robbed you or did anything to hurt you. That's when I can consider someone in the game.

People just think if they get in the game, someone or everybody gonna respect them. But fo' real, the game will get you caught up 'cause I mean you can get shot, killed, robbed — all of the above. And people just think the game is just a joy ride in the park.

But I don't even think someone is ever gonna get the picture until the world is full of punks that's too scared to get in da game.

-Young One B2

From The Beat: From your very real description of the game, why would you call people who are scared to be in it "punks." If the game is all that you say (getting shot, killed, robbed), then the word we would use for people who are scared of being in it is "smart." What about you, Young One? Are you going too be one of the smart ones?

Unhappy

Today I feel unhappy because them people play me. They set me up so I be in my cell just thinking about new ways about how they played me just to get me in these walls 'cause they couldn't wrap me with knowing, so they played me with the school house.

-Mike B4

From The Beat: How did they play you exactly? What do you mean they played you with the school house? Does that mean you weren't going to school? What can you do to never put yourself in that position again? How can you stay out when they finally let you out?

Bottling Up

I'm back in the slammer and was just broke loose to the fullest. So maybe it was like some sort of salvation from my own doings — like a time out to regain my own conscience. I hope I can put these thoughts to rest, but I can just feel it bottling up...

-Baby Chino B4

From The Beat: Maybe we're biased, but a good way to release those bottled thoughts is to write. We admire the fact that you can look at this experience as time to reflect. How can you apply the time you're doing now to your life in a positive way once you're free?

Being In Juvie

Being in juvie ain't nothing nice, man. I'm tired of these staff telling me when to eat, go to the bathroom. But it ain't gone be for too long. I promises you that, ya heard me! But man, I be in juvie beastin' on these staff. But I can't wait till I get out.

My next court date is on the 20th of April. But man I might go home on EM. I hope so. When I get put I'm going to change a little bit because I would never rob nobody and that's a promise.

-B-Bezzy GU

From The Beat: So you won't rob people, but does that mean you'll be doing other things that will land you back up in juvie? Committing yourself not to rob anyone is great, but will it be enough to keep you free?

The Way I Feel

The way I feel for you
Is beyond your imagination
Whenever I think of you
My body gets this warm sensation
I want to take it slow
So I can place the feeling I have for you
In my chest
From the first time I talked to you
I knew I wanted you near my heart
Don't get scared
Because I'm keepin' it real
I just thought I would tell you
The way I feel.
Always, Dre.
Dre and Kida
Always,

-Dre LCRS

From The Beat: You're so smart to take it slow. It's respectful to get to know someone and to let her get to know you before you take it to a really profound and heavy level. It's good to nurture love and let it breathe.

Locked Up

The system got me locked up. I see it as a one-way ticket 'cause once yo' ass in ain't no gettin' out… and I hope the cat who invented probation get smoked. Probation is not a joke. You could get violated for anything and search and seizure is a mutha.

The boys roll up, jump out: "What's your name? O' we in yo' pockets. What you got, money? You don't know how much exactly," confiscated. Forget the system.

-Cubba B4

From The Beat: It's messed up that those who are supposed to serve and protect are contributing to the negativity in your community. Could the police ever be effective? If so, how? If not, why? (Even if the guy who invented probation got smoked, that wouldn't end probation, so it's up to you to avoid those traps…)

Some Days

Some days I feel like the world is not on my side.
Some days I feel like everything I say goes.
Some days I feel like I'm the king of the world.
Some days I feel lower than the mud on the ground.
Some days I cry 'cause I'm feeling sad.
Some days I smile 'cause I'm feeling happy.
Some days where I live is peaceful.
Some days where I live it is not peaceful.
Some day my people will listen to me…
Some day, some day.

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: What do you feel on this particular day? What affects your mood the most? The weather? Your friends? Freedom? Are there things that make you both cry and smile? What are these things? You kind of snuck up on us with those last two lines because they talk about what might happen in the future. If people listened to you, what would they hear?

It Comes With The Program

What up Beat? It's yah boy Vinny, up in B5 as you can see, but it's nothing. I'm just doing me, listening to these lies they tellin' up here about weed, dope, and girls. But it's nothing. It all comes with the program.

But that's why I love The Beat, because I can tell the world how I feel.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: Well, it's pretty clear that being locked up is "nothing" to you, because you haven't found a way to stay out yet. So, do you like it in here? Three squares, a bed and lots of boys to talk to. Yeah, it sounds ideal…

Feeling

I am feeling really bad right about now. Yeah, I'm feeling real bad. I don't know because I am feeling bad but at the same time I am feeling good because my mom told me I might get out soon so again, I don't know.

-Drew B4

From The Beat: Getting out soon is great news. Why are you feeling bad? Does it have to do with being locked up? We hope you get out soon, but it will make us feel really bad if you don't find a way to stay out!

Game Playing

I'm playing the game but the game is playing me also. When people are out there selling drugs, gambling, stealing, fighting, or just kicking it in the streets, too much karma will come one day. It happens to everybody, good are bad. You control your life but the game will always control your karma.

-Lil' Ma GU

From The Beat: So how do you plan to keep your karma positive and free of bad energy? What will you change when you regain your freedom so that the game isn't playing you, and so that you won't have to come here?

How Are You Feeling

Man, this M Beezy, and I'm holdin' it down up in B4 — me and a few of my dogs. Man, it a strip I was just reading something in The Beat about a person getting robbed slippin' in them streets.

Now, a few weeks go past an' a person got smacked for everything, I mean everything — life, chain, gold ones, everything. That's just how the streets go lil' cousin.

Then this week another person got smacked trying to come back off vacation. It's really tough in them streets. It's hard time for the black folks in America but the streets ain't never gone stop because life goes on with or without you. That the way I'm feeling in YGC unity B4 so come find me, I'm out here.

-M Beezy B4

From The Beat: We can't tell if what's going on in the streets is going to stop or not, because nothing ever stays the same. It's easy to look around and conclude it will always be like it is today, because that's the only experience you have. But trust us, it hasn't always been this way, so it doesn't have to always be this say. You know first hand how cruel the streets can be, so is that enough to keep you off of them? You see people suffering ill fate all around you, so what can you do to make it so people suffer less — and what can you do to keep yourself from suffering similar fates? What can you do to make things better for your community, and most importantly for yourself?

I'm In Control

I am playing the game. I control every move I make. I don't make the rules, but I break them. I manipulate people and I have a way of getting over or winning.

Sometimes the game gets the better of me, but for the most part, I win. I'm way ahead of the game right now but it has a reputation for catching up to you! Who knows who will win, only time will tell.

-Timon B4

From The Beat: In your definition, what's winning? How do you win the game? Is it how much money you make? How old you live? How healthy you are? What kind of relationships you make? Whether your family respects you? How often you give your freedom up? How do you win the game?

How Are You Feeling

Today was coo' 'cause I found out that I was going to my group home tomorrow. I wanna go there quick, so I could finish my 90 days and get out and go chill on the outs.

-Walter

From The Beat: We understand. Do you plan on just doing your time and that's it, or do you want to learn something? When you say you want to chill on the outs, does that mean you want to go back to doing whatever you were doing that brought you here, or that you plan to make some changes to prevent yourself from coming back?

My Adolescent Life

It all started when I was not yet fifteen. I was going to Visitation Valley Middle School, and I was hanging with a couple of my boys. So we ditched school to go rob someone.

So when we got there, there was some dude. So me and my boy went to rob him. So that was my first time in YGC. So later on that year I turned fifteen. Me and my boy JJ went in a car. So we drove it all the way to Richmond and back to the city and got pulled over. So that was my second time in YGC.

So when I turned sixteen, I got caught for battery. That was my third time in YGC. So when I turned seventeen. I went to a group home 'cause I got a robbery case. But now that I think of it, it was not worth it 'cause now I am not going to see the ones I love. But I know being in the halls it has taught me something.

-Young B B5

From The Beat: This is a pretty serious record, Young B, and one that tells us you began as a child doing things that children do. It also tells us that you are no longer a child, but a young man who has the intellectual ability to examine his own life and his own responsibility for it, and to make some changes. That's our hope. What's yours?

My Experience

My experience in juvie taught me a big lesson. Just being around the other kids made me want to change my life. I ended up here because of a fight. I had to stay here for two days.

All the other kids are here for other reasons like smoking weed, selling drugs and robbing, and they have to stay here for longer. Some of them constantly. I mean right when they're released they're back after two weeks and they're wasting half they're teenage life locked up. I see this and I think of my own future. I don't want to end up like that so I have to change.

-Nadia GU

From The Beat: You're wise to see that this can easily become a revolving door kind of experience — and you're even wiser to want to avoid that experience. So it sounds like coming in here for a few days was actually useful for you. If you were put here for a fight, then you know what you have to work on in yourself to keep yourself free. So, how are you planning to address that problem?

Worse Where I'm From

Man, what's really good with The Beat? It's ya boy Baby Grimey, just chilling in B5, the max. chillin', just thinkin' about shhh in the past fo'real. I really wish I wouldn't have done the things I did. I just wanted to get money, ya know? Because that what I'm really after right now. So I thought why not, round up the troops and go on a jackin' spree. Came up to a lot of money, at least like five Gs. The police only found $500, feel me? But the shhh I did was stupid.

Now I'm locked up and I keep failing these weak-ass group homes they sendin' me to. It's like they want me to mess up so they can keep me away from my family. But that shhh ain't doing nothing but making me mad. And knowing me, I'm the type that keep my anger inside. So now they say I'm a walking time bomb waiting to explode.

Man I'ma end up doing something stupid. Send me to the Y. Shhh ain't nothing, I can't handle. It's worse where I'm from. Bye!

-Baby Grimey B5

From The Beat: You'd better be careful what you wish for, BG, because you might just get it. You say the treatment you're getting now is driving you crazy, filling you with a rage that might explode. Do you think the Y is going to be easier than this? Do you think staff there won't try to provoke you into angry outbursts or fights so they can add six months here or six months there to your time? If you know "they" want you to mess up, then why give them what they want? The best part of what you've written is the wish that you hadn't done the things you did to get here. You will have your day in the sun again, and that's when we'll know (and you'll know) if these regrets are sincere or just words to say. Believe us — if you do more of the same, expect more of the same.

This Is Me

I'm browner than a Bobby Brown piss test.
Girls love me until they got no love left.
Do it moving 'cause slow ninjas get left
and miss the game like a sick ref.
A quick left and a over hand right,
a fat 44 so trees and a mike
are my weapons of mass destruction
Detectives know not to ask me nothing.
I'm solid. I might speak the garlic and cheese on my French bread. Swallow it please when I get fed, I'm pimp fed.
Girls feed me well.
Never would they let the world see me fail.
They bring me mail like I'm a mailbox.
A pimp with no Gators, Air Forces and Shell Top.

-J-Gutta B5

From The Beat: We appreciate how well you wrote this piece, JG. We admire you for being "solid." But to us, you would be even more solid if you found a way to stay your-ass free! It doesn't matter how much girls love you if you keep allowing yourself to be put with nothing but other males. Your "weapons of mass destruction" aren't really very powerful when you're having to answer to strangers telling you what to do with every minute of your day and night. Time to start loving yourself and your freedom, but that will require some changes in your life. Without making those changes, expect to be writing some great poetry about what you don't have...

Confused

Stuck in this locked up position
My freedom is what I'm missin'
I'm deep in thought
Thinkin' what the streets have taught me
Livin' life in the streets
Means you gotta kill to eat
But life outta the streets
A nine-to-five would be sweet
I don't know which road is right for me
But I do know one thing
I'm a lose my life
'Cause I'm in beef
I took an oath
Screw stripes
I'm in it for life"
So, no matter what road I take
Until I die

-Neezy LCRS

From The Beat: We sense the confusion in your piece. If you are serious about wanting a better life then stand up tall and walk away from the old ways and come down to our office and work at The Beat! Violence is not the answer, and it is so sad that too many ignorant people think it is.

Making My Moves

I was in the game of life and it's not a easy life. It's full of good and bad things. You should always think before you act. There are two things you could never get back — time and spoken word. I make all moves in the game. You can't let no one move for you.

-Lafranz

From The Beat: What does it mean that you "make all the moves in the game?" The game you're playing now is to answer to staff telling you every move to make and every move not to make. So saying that you "can't let no one move for you" doesn't match your situation, 'cause you've allowed the system to put you here where you have to let others "move for you." Time to rethink how you live your life if you want to make those moves for yourself...

I Am Playing The Game

Never have I let the game play me. I mean I took the risk as a sacrifice because the deal was good. I mean it's hard to explain, but my goons understand me. You got to be in it to win it no matter what the situation is. Know what you talking 'bout.

-Chill Will B5

From The Beat: In this short piece, you seem to be looking backwards to explain your choices. We'd really like to read a thoughtful piece from you that looks forward to what your expectations are for the future.

Am I Playing The Game Or Is The Game Playing Me?

I feel like its 50/50. Half because I'm in jail, well juvenile and I'm being controlled, and half I'm controlling myself. But I don't do too much to lose my privileges, I think smarter.

I'm feeling like I need to step my game up a little bit because obviously I'm in the halls. But I won't change me.

-Dina GU

From The Beat: Why are you unwilling to change? What are you afraid of? Are you so perfect that you don't need to change? Unfortunately, it takes more than just stepping up your game "a little bit" to gain the other half of that control you don't have. The system won't change, so it's up to you.

Dis How I Feel

I feel like the game is playing me. It's getting the best of me 'cause I be staying out hecka late past my curfew. That stuff got me caught up and back in here.

-Lil' Nicoya GU

From The Beat: It's an important first step that you are able to admit that you are being played by the game. It takes maturity to recognize that. You'll need all that maturity, plus determination to get to the second stage and start changing your life, so that you turn into the player, not the played. Are you ready for it?

Feel Great

I am feeling great! My PO came to see me today and she told me that I might be getting out soon. I'm happy because I've been here for way too long and she told me that on Friday she gone bring me some lunch — she's gone bring me some Chinese food (yyyyyayyyyy!)

And she says that as soon as I get out of here, I'm not goin' be on probation anymore. I can't wait to get out.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: We are glad to see you so excited. It will be thrilling to get out at first, and especially to be off paper. But once that first feeling of euphoria fades, what are you planning to do? You have a real second chance to try new things and meet new people. Are you up for it? With your experience here, we sure hope you've learned a few things about what you have to stop doing in order to stop surrendering your freedom.

Bein' On DRB

Man I been on DRB for 96 hours. I was going crazy and I was on split too, so I was mad as hell. But they let me and my squad go outside an' play basketball for a minute.

But when I was on DRB I was cussing out all the staff 'cause am a beast. I been in this place for three weeks and three days. Das too long for a big dawg. But they can't hold me down forever, yaheard me! But when I get out I'm gone be the beast of the streets straight killing it, ya heard me.

-B. Bezzy GU

From The Beat: If you got 96 hours of room time and spent that time cussing out staff, then we don't see you as a beast at all — we see you as a child. Because that behavior is super childish. It can do nothing to the staff, but it can do everything to you. Or, maybe you're really a beast — and the zoo is full of dangerous beasts. And they're all behind bars. A beast of the streets will always be in danger of being caged. When you say you were mad, who were you mad at? You give us no sign that you did anything to deserve any of this, like they are responsible for where you are but you are not responsible. Unless you can see your own part in your temporary enslavement, we hate to say it, but we see you giving up that precious gift of freedom more and more. If you like it here, then just keep doing what you've been doing.

Your Life In My Hands

My hands are here to protect you
From everything that's not good.
But it's hard to do that
While livin' in the 'hood
My hands want to hold you
When we spend time together
To shield you from the cold
Winter weather
My hands long to roam your body
(With your permission)
Just me and you in sunny paradise
Is what I'm wishin'

-Neezy LCRS

From The Beat: Nice love poem, Neezy. You do seem like a man who would be proud to protect his lady from any ugliness or cruelty. Have you sent this poem to the lady who inspired it? We hope so. Now make her proud by truly walking away from the ugliness that brought you here.

Fresh To Death

What thizz it with all y'all locked down in tha halls? And I know y'all like, "Damn! It's the same ol' shhh." Youngsters like us keep gettin' locked up, but hopefully we all get out one day and like 2Pac said, "Only God can judge me, but I'm still a hustler like Cassidy in or out of jail.

Yeah, I stay with shoes that they ain't even came out wit'. But it's what it is and I stay too damn fresh so you can't knock the hustle baby. So let me see if you can run it. But they say that I'm a problem. That might be my next Beat name, so look out for that. Keep that in mind don't forget about that.

But I'm about to rap it up and go in my room and get stupid doo doo dumb. See you next time.

-Young Fabe B5

From The Beat: Well, Tupac was right for himself. God has judged him because he died. But unfortunately for you, Tupac was wrong about the living, because we have a system that is designed to judge you, and hold you to certain consequences after that judgment. Saying that nobody can judge you but god doesn't keep you out of here, doesn't prevent you from having a record that will follow you down through the years, and doesn't free you to live the life you'd like to live. Only you have the power to bring that change about.

The Player Behind The Moves

I am the player behind the moves 'cause I don't let nobody move me the way they want to. Yes, I do, 'cause I don't follow nobody's rules or the game's rules. I have my own rules to get my money on 'cause if everybody see you play the game like them, then they start hating on you 'cause everybody know I'm 'bout the money.

What makes me lose control is if I don't get out and get my little hustle on. I define winning by having money in my pocket every day, to spend on Jordans and clothes

-Lil' One GU

From The Beat: So if winning is getting your hustle on and having a pocket full of money every day, then a quick look around you should tell you that you are losing! There's no money here, except the money you are putting into the pocket of the system by allowing yourself to be processed through it. If you're the "player behind the moves," then it should be clear to you that it's time to change some of those moves — or find yourself spending more and more time as a "guest" of the county.

Locked Up Minds

I say you're locked up even when you're not in here because all you know is one thing and that's the block. That's basically being locked up because that's the only place you know.

-Dominic

From The Beat: We think you have a good point. How can you, or anyone, expand his knowledge to include something more than the block? In what ways are you locked up personally?

Dear God, Dear Erica

I can't help it I'm weak
I need to open my eyes up and seek
I need to see the real world, just a peek
I need to hear your voice speak
I am too strong but I do need a tear to leak
I have you in my mind every time I sleep
I need to get out of here take that big leap
I have you in my heart and spirit real deep
I need you so my heart can be complete
I need my heart to feel the warm heat
I need to feel your comfort over me like a warm sheet
I need you to be right next to me
I need you in my spirit, for you are the key
I will never leave you, fore you I will cherish and keep
I am too strong but I need to lay on my bed and weep
I want to scream your name from the highest mountain peak
I miss you, but one day we will once again meet
I have been challenged by the world
But the world, I'll shall beat.
Dedicated to two most important people.
To God, and Erica

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: We can feel the pain in your tight poem, Lil' Roach. The love you have for Erica can help you get through this dark place. But the love you have for God should help you get through in a different way — in a way that let's you be the child of God that you were intended to be. This is a beautiful poem to dedicate to God, but do you imagine that God has His own poem to dedicate to you? What do you think that poem would contain?

Today I'm Full Of Anger

Today I'm full of anger
It's almost like every day
But today it's more than any other day
Fools are lucky we are in this place
Because I can't do shhh
Because just if I fight
That's 30 to 60 days to the drain
Peers actin' tough
Because they know
They can't be touched
They wanna use confrontation
Because they think I can't handle the situation
An' staff wanna send me to meditation
But to me that's some hallucinations
An' if peers would do this to me on the outs
I would mess with them like if it a game on a Play Station
Man, this incarceration
Is buildin' me with frustration

-Lil' Lazy LCRS

From The Beat: Young homie you chose this life of anger and frustration, so if you do not like it then it is time to change up and do something a bit more productive. The life style you are living right now will continue to be a burden of pain, anger and sadness. Wake up, before it's too late and you find yourself in a position you would give anything to get out of. Your choice.

How I'm Locked Up When I'm Not Here

I am locked up, but still with that, Homes, that's coo' 'cause I'm with them. But I miss my family and my jaina. I don't like when people telling me what to do. Alrato…

-Slow Pain B5

From The Beat: No, we don't like people telling us what to do, either. That's why we stay out of places where the definition that people are telling you what to do. Juvenile Hall is that kind of place, so how much to you miss your family? How much to you hate being where you are? If you come back (meaning, if you keep doing what brings you here), then we'll figure you don't hate it as much as you say you do.

My 'Hood

My 'hood, it's crackin'
Blunts puffin'
Thizz poppin'
Rivals attackin'
Walls taggin'
To Pelican Bay, drugs traffickin'
Gangs crazy reactin'
Listenin' only to the Bay's rappin'
Fools are dreads shakin'
Fast money makin' an' takin'
Fools smashin'
Beat lovin'
Beat proppin'
For The Beat every Friday waitin'
Because ya be publishin' w'at we're livin'
Much love to The Beat from Lil' Lazy. All right, then, late… One love.

-Lil' Lazy LCRS

From The Beat: Absolutely we cut a chunk of your piece! You do not teach us a damn thing, all you are doing is giving props to a lifestyle that is killing us all so slowly. We know too many young people who were once like you, thinking the lifestyle was all that ,and now they're doing life sentences or are six feet under. Glad you dig The Beat, but use it to teach and start saving some young readers from experiencing the nonsense that is plaguing too many stubborn youngsters. Mark our words, one day you'll realize what a waste this has all been. Hating is not what it is about from us, but seeing you live a long productive life is!

Nobody…But You

I want a girl as my accomplice
Who spends many nights wit' me
I want a girl wit' class
In public
Knows how to conduct herself
Like a lady
And not show her ass

I want a girl wit' smarts
Who knows how to go after what she wants
Wit' a job, so she can depend on herself
To get it on her own

I want a girl I can take care of
Shower her wit' love and gifts
Who will return the love I shared

I want a girl like you
'Cause there is no other girl like you
So I want nobody
But you

-Neezy LCRS

From The Beat: Beautiful, Neezy. Your attitude toward this lady represents a dilemma many women face—you want a woman who is free and independent, but you also want her to need your protection and love. Your hopes that this lady will be well balanced are understandable, but can you remember, ain't nobody perfect? For example, if she starts really loving you and starts to depend on you, will you understand and accept that?

Things I Love

I love people. People love me. I love playing football because I like running people over.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: Remind us not to play football with you…

Bored

I am feeling kinda bored, anxious, and ready to go home. I got to stay focus so I can do my time.

-Chris B5

From The Beat: Are you really ready to go home? How did you get ready? Are there changes in your future when you are home? Like what?

No Freedom, No Rights

The game playing me. I am in the halls because what someone said I do and I didn't do at all. The rules of the game is hard and difficult for me because I don't have no freedom or no rights.

-Jordan B4

From The Beat: We know that usually there are two sides to every coin, so have you gained anything from the game besides hardship? What do you have to do not just to regain your freedom, but to hold onto it?

Love Ticket

White as daisies
I fear my feelings for you
Because my feelings for you
Drive me crazy

From the taste of your lips
To the sway in your hips
For the lust in your eyes
To have that special someone as my wife

Love
The passion we feel for each other
Is more than the passion
I feel for my mother

If your beauty isn't broken
Girl, don't fix it
I love you no matter what
I'm your love ticket

-Neezy LCRS

From The Beat: Love can change everything, especially your priorities, Neezy. It can make you feel like you're crazy. Welcome to the wild ride called love. Sometimes it seems impossible to control it. All you can really do, when you're wild in love, is try to control your behavior. If you and this lady get together when you're on the outs again, how will that affect your ambitions to go back to school and get a real, legal job? Good luck!

Locked Up Mind

I keep my mind locked up in my head. I got a different way of seeing everything, a way I keep things to myself. I just don't be out in the open. I keep my personal things to myself.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: In a way, what you're saying is that keeping your thoughts to yourself actually gives you a little more freedom to operate. As long as what you're doing is legit, we see nothing wrong with that.

Stay Out

Well, I really don't know what to say, but to all the people locked up—don't come back when you get out. YGC is not the place to be. You might think this shhh is cute or cool, but it ain't. I used to think the same shhh, but later on found out how it really is. Just be cool and lay low, so you don't get locked up.

-Lil' Lone LCRS

From The Beat: Good advice for everyone on the outs, Lil' Lone. What went down in juvy that taught you that you don't ever want to go back? Do you have any stories about juvy that you could tell that would convince young people on the outs they don't want to follow you inside? If so, why don't you write them for The Beat?

Welcome To Hell

I'm stuck in B4, welcome to hell.
My time is discipline, gettin' swole in my cell
Thinkin' if I was out in the streets how would I be makin' dough
I'll probably get a job and on the side I'm jukin' dope
I'm tryin' to make my thou-wows and be on top of the rest
Instead I'm in this system, time wastin' slowly by every breath
While the judge is playin' games with my life.
Decidin' where I go and how long I have to spend my time
The staff is cool except when they talk hella shhh
My time is divided in months up in this eight by six

-Young Beast B4

From The Beat: Everyone's definition of hell is somewhere they don't want to be. So since being locked up is your hell, what will heaven look like once you're free? And — more important — what's your plan for maintaining a hell-free existence?

Check it out. I've been struggling ever since I could remember. There was times when my mom was doing bad, so I had to get off sacks to support myself at the age of eleven.

The True Lil' Zillah

What it do man? My name is Lil' Zillah. I'm from Hayward. My city is small. People think Hayward is whack, but it's whatever on that. Everybody from Hayward and open-minded people know what it is: "Hayward is on da map." I'm just putting it out there, yadada-smell good. But let me get to my story, ai'ight?

Check it out. I've been struggling ever since I could remember. There was times when my mom was doing bad, so I had to get off sacks to support myself at the age of eleven. What I'm sayin' ain't no fake shhh… This is real talk. I got jumped into my clique at the age of 11 1/2 because I was the lil' mama on da block doing my own shhh. Times was rough. Almost all my brothers is into some kinda clique. Man, it's crazy 'cause they all doing they own shhh.

Yeah, I rap and yeah, yo' girl got flows like a river. "Ha, ha, ha, I'm laughin' at you haters." But yeah, I really thank my big cousin Ree for helpin' me. I love you Ree…

I want to send some shout-outs. To Ree 'cause you foreva got hope in me. You helping me through this rehab shhh right now. Thanks big cousin. To Britoria, you are my best friend. I miss you so much. We've been through thick and thin. I miss you. Do good in program so we can be together again. To Shader-Man, big cousin, you doing time right now. I hope you be out to see your son grow up. I love you. Keep yo' head up. To Pooka, you 're my big sister. I love you so much. We've been through hella stuff and I love you. Last, but not least, to my Granny, you are my inspiration to do this damn program. I love you so much. We lost contact, but I love you and miss you so much. I love all my ninjas.

-Lil' Zillah

From The Beat: We can tell that you've definitely been through it, Lil' Zillah. But what we can't tell is how much you want to go back to it, and how much you want to do something different. Pride of place is good, but not if it means you have to do things to "rep" a certain city or spot that lands you in the box, ya hear? We are touched by your shout-outs, and hope you keep the memory of your Granny in mind and do what would make her proud as you move through this program and on out into the world.

How Am I Feeling?

I feel so good right now. So, I'm in a program and I just moved phases. Now on the phase I'm in, I get a 24-hour pass home and it's so good 'cause my family has been asking, "When are you getting an overnight pass?" And telling me I'm sick of 12-hour passes.

It hurts me the most when my baby niece says that stuff. (She's 7.) So I also feel good right now 'cause I'm almost out of here! I have one more phase to go till I go home!

-Merrily

From The Beat: Congratulations, Merrily. Just keep up the progress so that you will be strong enough to resist those who will tempt you to go back to your old, familiar ways. Just don't do anything you wouldn't want your baby niece to do, and you'll be fine.

Feeling Lonely

What's up Beat? This is Taz. Well, the way I am feeling is, I am lonely. I've been lonely for a while, about four years. I have no one besides me, but that's okay because at least I have myself.
I will always be lonely till one day comes and it changes my life.

-Taz

From The Beat: Of course you won't always be lonely, Taz. What you are doing now is reclaiming the love and respect you have for yourself, and that will give you an appealing air of self-confidence that will act like catnip to any number of discerning individuals out there.

Feeling?

I'm angry!!!!

-Gabriela

From The Beat: At whom? Angry enough to change the path that led you here?

How Am I Feeling?….

Every time I close my eyes
I see her
Then I realize
That when I open them up to see
There's nothing left but scars in me
Doing a line
Smoking the crys.
All I want is
To go away
I don't want to exist
I think of her every night and day
Instead of thinking the right way
Why did she use the word "forever?"
But shhh….
That was when we were together

What's up Beat? I'm still here in San Francisco, hella lonely, and I miss my ex-girlfriend Lauren so bad, so I'm feeling like crap.

-California

From The Beat: What we know about crystal is that when a person takes it, it becomes the most important "love" in their life. It sounds like you and Lauren were both suffering from the same disease, which even your love was not strong enough to overcome. We're sorry you're feeling so lousy, but we hope you are able to gain control of your life through what you are learning at Walden House.

My Thought On This Week's Topics

Am I playing the game or is the game playing me? I once let the game of life catch up with me and play me, but I eventually realized I control my life, not someone else, or anything else.

How am I locked up when I'm not here? In here (Walden House) I can't do anything wrong. I wouldn't want to, but at home, out in the real world, there ain't any rules. I do what I want, even if I don't really want to! Locked up in the dope game!

How do I feel? I feel good. I'm glad I'm working towards something other than getting my next sack.

-Sara

From The Beat: Yes, doesn't it feel good to start regaining control of your life. You wrote that "out in the real world, there ain't any rules," but that isn't the real world at all, that's a fantasy world that leads to real-world consequences. There are rules in the real world, and all of us, young and old, pay the price when we break them.

Santa Cruz

Freedom

Freedom.
Nothing but a wish.
They got me locked up.
Lost seven months of freedom when I could've run,
but I didn't because I was told it would help me get off probation.
And then I wouldn't have had to deal with this crap anymore.
Seven months gone over a damn cigarette.
Now they're telling me I have another six months, at least.

-Cigarette smoke

From The Beat: We don't know the particulars of your case, but we suspect there's more to it than a single cigarette. We understand your anger and frustration. That's a long time and a lot of freedom. But are you being honest about the situation you're in? You can't repair the damage without looking at the whole scene, honestly.

A Lesson

Being in juvenile hall has taught me a lesson. I've learned that smoking weed doesn't solve problems. It just makes worse ones. It's got me sent to a group home. It ruined my relationship with my family (mom).

-Chris

From The Beat: So now you know. And you'll have a chance to repair the damage. We wish you well. And about those problems – remember, no one is problem free. It's part of the price of the ticket for being on planet earth.

How I Learn

I learn by traveling. I have been all over the west coast. I have been traveling for five years. I'm 17. I turn 18 in four months.

My favorite place to go is Portland, Oregon. I plan to go back there someday. The people in Portland are more real. The architecture is different. The most different I have seen.

-Shayna

From The Beat: Your story sounds amazing. We wish you'd tell us more, lots more. What is it, for instance, about the architecture in Portland that is so different. Please share your traveling tales with us.

I Would Like…

I would like my life to go good –
to never get sent to the hall again –
to never get arrested.
Instead, I would like to get back in school
and go to college, and get a good job
and live in a big house and drive nice cars
and have a lot of money.

-Noel

From The Beat: Hmmm……. you don't want much. Maybe you could raise your expectations. We're just kidding. But the only way you'll get those things is by working hard. And you can start with an honest reflection of where things started to go in the wrong direction. You can't relive the past and do it over, but if you're very aware of where you erred, you don't have to repeat your mistakes.

I would like my life to go good – to never get sent to the hall again – to never get arrested

I End Up Back In Here

I play my game but I made wrong decisions. I think when I am in the outs, that it's cool, but it's not, 'cause I end up back here and that's not cool, because I got stuff to do now, like I got a job, and when I get out tomorrow, I get my pay check and I am going to party over the weekend. I smoke weed all the time—that's also why I end up here. But when I get out, I am going to make better decisions, so I don't end up back here.

-Alex

From The Beat: Let's say you do get out of juvy tomorrow, Alex, and you go to that party this weekend. You know if you smoke weed at that party and get arrested, you'll be right back in juvy Monday. When are you going to start to make all the changes you write that you need? How about now?

Ballin'

The reason is sort of because blowing trees, because I took a UA (urine analysis,) but I don't want to get locked up again, so that's part of the game, but once you start doing that, you'll regret it in here.

-Oscar

From The Beat: How serious is your liking drugs? Is weed something you can do without on the outs, or do you want/need a program to help you? Is your freedom worth staying away from weed? If so, we hope you can love your drug-free freedom!

I Am Feeling Good

I am feeling good because I have court on April 17th, so I hope that goes good. OK, got to go. Peace.

-Santiago

From The Beat: What are the alternatives that the judge's decisions in court can bring to you, Santiago? We wish you the best.

What Keeps Me Locked Up

The color of my skin.

-Alex

From The Beat: What is it about the color of your skin that you think keeps you incarcerated? What color is your skin? Do you believe that if your skin were another color, you'd be free? If so, what color would that be? Do you take any personal responsibility for whatever goes down in your life, regardless of the color of your skin? Take a good look at yourself young one, it's not all about the color of your skin.

I think when I am in the outs, that it's cool, but it's not, 'cause I end up back here

EPA Charter School

Friends

How many of you have friends? We all have the friends we tell secrets. We have those that we talk and share with that have our back. And around the corner they have to have one or who can you trust?

-Midnight

From The Beat: We want to thank you for writing about friends, and we want to encourage you to think more about this topic because we think that this will be one of the topics we will be writing about later on.

Good Grades

What I worry about is my school, which are my grades. I worry about getting good grades. I try my best. My goal is to practice so I could be able to get to high school. I also worry about trying to practice for tests and quizzes. I want to get good grades. Many students get good grades. Is it because I do not try my best, or I need to do more effort?

-Heidy

From The Beat: What kind of grades do you usually get? Are you studying as hard as you can? What's your best subject? What 's your worst subject? What kind of help do you think you need to bring your grades up so that you won't have to worry?

Small Town Cemetery

EPA is a small town cemetery
When the gats go off
Then heads pop off

Ninjas try to act hard
Then get roasted like tar
Tryin' ta spit game
And front with their name

Then use the sidewalk as a pillow
Then they sleep like a willow
And the small town cemetery
Gets smaller and smaller by the day

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: This is actually a very scary poem. Yes, we know how dangerous it can be on the streets of EPA, but is this the only kind of thing that happens here? Aren't there some pretty good things that are going on too? If you think you're living in a "small town cemetery" do you want to leave? Where would you like to go?

Why I'm Mad

I'm mad because this stupid little classmate made me get in trouble because she kept messing with me. I hate her. She don't listen and she always talkin' and playin'. The next time she messes with me I'm going to slap her.

The reason why I'm so mad is because I was having a good day until I came in this class. That's why nobody wants to sit by her.

-Tryica

From The Beat: We talked to you a little about this after you wrote it, so we know you were very angry. We hope some of that anger has passed, because our experience tells us that if you focus that much energy on hate, you'll end up making yourself sick. Also, we had to cut some words out of your piece because those words are NEVER acceptable in The Beat. In fact, it was a close call whether to print this piece or not, Tryica, because we don't want The Beat to be a place to hate on others. Finally, there is no excuse at all for hitting another girl, even if she is annoying you. You may not care about the consequences at this moment, but later on down the line you will care because those consequences can only be negative for you. This is a time to summon all the maturity you have and not react like a child. We would never tolerate anyone hitting a girl for any reason, so we hope you think long and hard before doing anything like that.

Lo Siento Por Lo Que Dije

Yo quiero decirle a mi novia que lo siento por las cosas que le dije. Estaba enojado y quiero decirle que le siento. Quiero que sepa que no lo quise decir, que nomas dije eso porque estaba enojado. Realmente no sabía lo que decía. También quiero decirle que la amo mucho.

From The Beat: Sabes, haber aceptado tu error y haber escrito esto es tu primer paso. ¿Cual es tu segundo?

I'm Sorry For What I Said

I want to tell my girlfriend that I'm sorry for the things that I told her. I was mad and I want to tell her that I'm sorry. I want her to know that I didn't want to say it and that I only said it because I was mad. In reality, I didn't know what I was saying. I also want to tell her that I love her very much.

-Solo

From The Beat: You know, accepting the fact that you made a mistake and having written this is the first step. What is your second?

Mi Familia Es Lo Más Importante

De lo que yo estoy preocupado es de mi familia. Mi familia es lo más importante que tengo. Ellos son lo más importante porque ellos son las personas que me han cuidado cuando tengo problemas. Me preocupo de mí también, porque si no me preocupo de mí, como me voy a preocupar de mi familia.

From The Beat: Es verdad lo que dices, para ser feliz a tu familia primero tienes que hacer algo por ti. Si ellos son lo más importante deberías de darles lo que realmente se merecen. Puedes ser alguién en esta vida.

My Family Is What's Most Important

What I am worried about is my family. My family is the most important thing that I have. They are what's mot important to me because they are the people who have taken care of me when I have problems. I also worry about myself because if I don't worry about myself, how am I going to worry about my family?

-Carlos

From The Beat: It's true what you say; in order to make your family happy, you first have to do something for yourself. If they are the most important thing in your life, then you should give them what they truly deserve. You can be someone in this life.

Apology: To Angel From Jaime

One day I was fighting my little brother because he started annoying me. So I said shut up and he didn't listen. So I got up and pushed him. Then he went to tell on me, but when he came back I started to call him names like crybaby, snitch, girl, and I never said sorry.

I'm sorry Brotha. I know you want the devil to get outta me but I don't know if that can happen. I would try my best to control myself sometimes. Sorry. Do you accept my apology?

-Weasel

From The Beat: We can see that it's not just your brother that can annoy you, but you yourself! The way you talked to your brother obviously has bothered you, which means you'd like to find a way not to let your temper get out of control, and we want to encourage you to find a way to do that. Sometimes, the nasty things we say to the people we love end up hurting us more than it hurts them because we can't forget it! We hope you take The Beat and show this piece to Angel so that he will know you feel bad for what you said. We're sure he will forgive you.

Feeling Bad

I try my hardest when I'm mad not to say anything that will offend someone. I don't feel sorry, but I feel bad. One time I disrespected my mom by saying a couple strong words. Then she started crying.

I don't really think that I'm sorry for the mistakes I've made in my past, but I do feel bad. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

-Aylett

From The Beat: Making your mom cry by careless words can hurt more than getting a beating. You'll forget the beating, but you won't forget your mother's tears. Did you feel like apologizing to her when you saw her crying? We're not sure about that widely quoted belief that whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger. There are some things (like certain diseases) which don't kill you, but which make you weaker, not stronger.

Worrying About the Future

I worry about my family members not being with me because they will die when they are old. Also I worry about if I'm going to have a good future because I don't know my future. Also I worry about if the world is going to end when I am alive. And also I worry about if a hurricane is going to hit California.

-Javier

From The Beat: As far as we know, no hurricane has ever hit California — only earthquakes, floods and fires! When you worry about whether you'll have a good future or not, what is your definition of a good future? What do you want to accomplish in your life? It's natural to worry about your family's health, but don't worry so much that it affects your own health! We've heard talk about the world ending ever since we were small children, so we don't worry about that any more. The world's been here for a very long time, and we believe it will be here for a very long time to come.

Worries

What I worry about one day is my family members dying and not being with me anymore. Also not being able to go to college and being what I want to be and earn a lot of money and be successful. But I also worry about the people who don't have families or homes to live in or food to eat.

-Isaias

From The Beat: Of course you worry about your family and how long they'll live, but there's not much you can do about that except eat well, exercise and protect yourself from the drama on the streets. The fact that you also worry about other people — those without families or food or homes — tells us that you have a warm and caring heart, which is a very fine characteristic to have!

One time I disrespected my mom by saying a couple strong words. Then she started crying.

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry for not listening to you
I'm sorry I messed around instead of listening to you Babe
I'm sorry I took your kindness for weakness
I'm sorry I didn't love you the way you wanted to
I'm sorry I missed your birthday and
I'm sorry I can't be with you

-Midnight

From The Beat: We don't know who you are writing this apology to, Midnight, but it sounds very real and sincere. What do you mean when you say you took this person's kindness for weakness?

Heck No!

Crips vs. Bloods
No one really give a fudge
Crips vs. Bloods, fightin' over a color
Do a ninja really need a hug?
My cousin is a Blood 'cause he had no choice
They got two choices, freedom or their life

-Who Kyd

From The Beat: First, Kyd, we had to clean this up somewhat... Some words we won't print... Second, we like the point you're trying to make because it sounds to us like you plan to stay away from the childish game of fighting and dying over a color, and we applaud you for that. We're a little curious about your description of your cousin, though. If he "had no choice," what kind of choice do you think other gang members have? What does "choice" mean, and how do you exercise it? Why do you have a choice, but your cousin didn't?

Uncertainties

I am worried what will happen to me in the future. Anything can happen to me. I can get killed the next day, get fired from my job, get into a fight. These are things that can happen to me in the future.

These things can affect me in many ways. For example, if I die I won't get to see what's ahead in my life. My family will also be sad and I don't like to see them in that way. This is how these things can affect me.

-Jeffery

From The Beat: We can understand your fears about the future, especially not knowing what's going to happen. All you can do is take care in how you live your life, take care in how you choose your friends, take care in observing what's going on around you, take care of your body with a good diet and exercise and take care of your mind by studying hard in school and reading. If you do all these things, the future should take care of itself.

Cares And Careers

I'm worried about my future because I want to be a professional soccer player but my mom and dad said they don't want that and want me to study for a good career — anything I want, but not a professional soccer player. And that thing is a worry to me.

Another worry to me is the future for my two brothers because Christian wants to be a professional soccer player too. But like I said, my dad and mom said the same thing to him they told to me. My other brother wants to study a very good career like a professional doctor.

Like I said I want to be a professional soccer player but I want to have my own career like an architect and that is all that I want. But the thing is a worry to me because I want to be a professional soccer player.

-Victor

From The Beat: You know, Victor, your parents just want to make sure you have a profession that you can always rely on to provide you with a decent living just in case you don't make it as a professional soccer player. But the truth is, you can do both. If you study hard, get good grades, graduate from high school and then go to college, you can also play soccer the entire time. You can improve your game as you grow, and then, if you become good enough, you can have several choices for your future, not just one.

First Love

I had one all the way through first to third grade and we talked. I know what you're saying: What can you talk about at that age? But we were best friends and I wish it would stay that way. Well it did, all the way to 8th grade. We still know each other, but it's not really that close anymore. I still remember my first love forevermore.

-Midnight

From The Beat: Relationships can be tricky. You're lucky you had this tight friendship for so long. Do you have any ideas why it cooled and you're not that close any more? Did you just drift apart, or did something happen?

School Worries

I worry about my science fair because I think that I'm not passing the grade. And I'm worried about my grades because my grades are too low. They need to get higher to pass the grade. And I try my best. And I'm also worried about my things because one day I lost two new notebooks.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: Have you asked for help with your science fair or your other classes? We know you are smart, so what seems to be the problem? What do you think you need most to help you bring your grades up to help you pass?

Worried Thoughts

I worry about myself, who I want to be. I worry about what will happen to me. Will I be this smart, educated girl who makes a difference? I worry about my family, how they act, how they are.

I worry that my mom will change into other moms. I worry one day we won't get along, or get to talk anymore. I worry about different things in life that bother me in my head. What I think about worries me.

-Rina

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of worries, maybe too many. Do you think your mom worries about how much you worry about things? We also want to know if you will be that "smart, educated girl who makes a difference." We know your smart and we believe you will be educated — but what kind of a difference do you want to make?

Beat Friends

'Sup? This is Wizzy, writing to The Beat. Just wanted to talk about my best friends. They call me a tomboy because I play soccer and football. Those friends are all boys. Don't really care! I know they got my back. I really care about them and I got their back. Their names are Jorge, Victor, Gabriel and Rafael. Each of them has a nickname except Jorge.

They're younger and help me with what I need. I help them with what they need. We play truth or dare and just act stupid. They're in the 6th grade and I'm in the 8th. Weird thing is we don't care. We talk about nothing and we talk about everything.

This might not really sound important to you, but it is for me. Well, anyway, we play soccer and walk around. They call me Wizzy, not Lizzy. It's just for fun, but hey, it's just for us.

-Wizzy

From The Beat: This is a very sweet piece, Wizzy. We not only like the fact that your friends are boys and younger than you, but also that your description of your friendship is so natural and normal. How did you become friends with this group? Do your 8th-grade friends tease you about hanging out with "the boys"? What else do you like to do besides play soccer and football?

Stealin'

Stealin', cheatin'
It's like a hunger
A nignja need to stop eat
They go' get big as well
Snitches go' tell
Ninja yo' ass will go to jail
Trust me it won't fail

-Who Kyd

From The Beat: We like your simile (the comparison between stealing, cheating and hunger...) We do know people who get addicted to illegal behavior in the same way people can get addicted to food! And we also like your warning about going to jail. Now, let us issue our own warning — about cleaning up your language in The Beat... It's very colorful, but a word to the wise...

Worried About The Future

Something that I'm worried about is what is going to happen to me when I'm older. I'm worried that I could be shot when I get older. That is one of my worries.

The second is if I can make it in life, have a good job and pass college. I'm worried about that because I want a better life than I have today. That's why I'm worried about my life when I'm older.

The other thing that I worry about is my family. I worry if I can see them when I'm older.

-Oscar

From The Beat: It is a tragedy and a shameful fact about this country that someone as young as you would have to worry about being shot! We wish you didn't have that worry, but we understand why you do. Just take care about the people you associate with and the things you do. We think that school is the key to that "better life" that you want for yourself. Do what you know you have to do — study hard, do your homework, graduate from high school and get into college. If you do those things, we don't think you'll have to worry much about your future.

Worries Of Life

I worry about my friends and family. I worry that my friends are good. I worry about my parents too because they worry about me. I also worry about my boyfriend because he means so much to me. I also worry about the president making the stupid immigration law.

-Denise

From The Beat: If the Congress passes "the stupid immigration law" and the President signs it, how would that affect your family? How would it affect you? What kind of worries do you have about your family and friends?

Immigration Worries

I worry about getting accepted in the Navy. In order to get in the Navy I have to be a United States resident. I also worry that my dad needs to put in papers so I can become a United States resident. I've always wanted to be physically challenged.

-Oliver

From The Beat: Is the problem that you can't locate your dad to put in those papers for you? If you can't get into the Navy, are there other things you can imagine that would also challenge you physically? Do you also worry about the government deporting you or your family?

Family Worries

I worry that when I move I won't fit it. I worry that in the future I'm gonna be able to stay in contact with my best friend. I'm worried that I'm gonna get expelled from EPA Charter School for havin' my cousin beatin' some girl up. I worry about my family.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Are you moving? If so, where? We're sure that wherever you go, you'll be able to make friends. Why would you get expelled for something your cousin did? And why would your cousin beat up a girl?

Not Fat, Just Right

I worry about what's going to happen in the future. I worry if I'm going to have the same friends that I always hang out with. I worry I might get too fat and I won't have a boyfriend or any friends because my friends call me fat now, and I worry if it would really come true once I get older. I worry that I could never lose weight. Then my best friend say that all the time to the point that some of my other friends say that just to get on my nerves.

I don't trip off my best friend sayin' it because she just be playin' and she said it wasn't true that I was fat. I just don't like when my other friends say that because she ain't the skinniest girl in the world. Sometimes it look like I don't care, but in the inside it breaks me down. Then they said I eat a lot but I think I don't. When they say that I try to cut down eating so I won't get fat anymore. I had to even ask my best friend and he said that I wasn't' fat. He said I was thick. I mean the thick in a good way. The way the boys like them and like the girls who have a shape. Not too skinny and not too fat, just right.

And my best friend said I was just right. That made me feel very happy. But my other best friend she makes me happy too.

-Princess

From The Beat: You are definitely not fat! We don't think it's healthy for you to be so worried about your weight. Sometimes, just being so focused on your own body can be worse for your health than if you were fat, like making you cry on the inside while you're smiling on the outside! Have you ever heard of the expression, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder"? If you're beautiful on the inside, those who behold you will see it! Don't worry!

Polynesian Pride

I feel I need to speak out. I'm the only Polynesian in my school. Ain't that something! And I'm proud to be a Polynesian. I've got to speak because I can communicate not just in English. That's why I need to speak out.

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: Is it cool to be the only Polynesian here, or is it stressful? Can you speak any other languages besides English and Tongan? Do you want to live in the U.S. or in Tonga? Why?

I'm worried that I could be shot when I get older.

I'm Sorry

I'm sorry that females think I care.
I'm sorry that females with no hair think I want to hear them.
I'm sorry females think they cute.
I'm sorry females can't step to this.
I'm sorry that females can't tear me down.
I'm sorry I'm not as sensitive as you want me to be.
I'm sorry I can't keep you happy.
I'm sorry I'm brave an' you're not.
I'm sorry you're scary an' I'm not.
I'm sorry I have him an' you don't.
I'm sorry I complete you.
I'm sorry I'm stylin' an' you're not.
I'm sorry I'm hot, hot, hot.
I'm sorry I can't stand you an' that bothers me.
I'm sorry you hurt me an' now you're not here.
I'm sorry I 'cause you eternal tears.
I'm sorry I hate the sound of your voice.
I'm sorry I hate your name an' style.
I'm sorry.

-Candy Gurl

From The Beat: You know, most of these "apologies" sound sarcastic and cutting to us. It takes some kind of attitude to turn a piece titled "I'm Sorry" into a hate piece, which is what this poem sounds like. We're sorry you chose to use this topic to hate on someone because that's not what The Beat is for. We're sorry you didn't write a real piece about being sorry. We're sorry that you didn't tell us why you have such powerful feelings toward this person. We're sorry you're feeling so negative, and we hope you're feeling better!

Sometimes it look like I don't care, but in the inside it breaks me down.

The Different Types of People

The Immature One: The one who acts like a little kid all the time and needs to be told to grow up;
The Skanky One: The one who's always talkin' and getting' on people's nerves;
The Messy One: The one who's always sleepin'/messin' around with a lot of boys;
The Two-faced One: The one who wants to talk about you behind your back and then wanna smile all up in your face;
The Dumb One: The one who acts slow and doesn't get anything;
The Hyphy One: The one who always gets the party started, basically the fun one;
The Ghetto One: The one who ain't afraid to say nothin' to nobody;
The Quiet One: The one who is always quiet and never says nothin' but can still beat yo' ass;
The Smart One: The one dat get dem good ol' A+'s;
The Jealous One: The one who can't stand to see you wit' somebody else besides them;
The Mature One: The one who knows how to act mature but still has fun and gets hyphy;
The Nasty One: The one who just be doin' nasty stuff;
The Free One: The one who's carefree and just likes to have fun;
The Self-Conscious One: The one who's very body shy;
The Loud One: The one who don't know how to shut up;
The Annoying One: The one dat won't leave you alone;
The Lyin' One: The one who can't tell the truth for nothin';
The Mean One: The one dat's never bein' nice;
The Funny One: The one dat's a crack-up;

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: Wow! You've really thought about this, haven't you? Do you observe people all the time? You could write a story mixing up all these types to see how they interact. We can think of a few more types, too, like "The Studious One" (who studies all the time), "The Conscientious One" (who does what he or she's supposed to do), and "The Honest One" (who you can trust to tell the truth). Oh yes, and by the way, what type are you?

Love

I knew this boy that I met at a place one day. He came up to me and started looking from the back. I didn't react because it's normal, but I liked it 'cause he was cute and dark and fine.

He started talking to me. I would just smile and laugh but I didn't notice he was trying to work his way into my heart. Then we started talking to each other. One day he didn't come and I started to worry because he wasn't there.

One day on a Wednesday he saw me and we started talking', both faces just full of smiles. We hung out and he gave me a hug and left. Then I realized it was more than like. I know that it was love, young love at that. But I think if I saw him again and I looked and smiled he'll notice it's more. But maybe one day down the road it'll hit him and I'll be around somewhere so I can be his love.

-Midnight

From The Beat: This sounds like a very sweet relationship so far, Midnight, even if he doesn't realize yet that it could be more than friendship. And even if it doesn't blossom into full love, it still sounds like a friendship worth holding onto and developing. We hope he doesn't disappoint you. Love has many ups, but it also can have many downs.

Mi Amigo Come Mucho

Yo tengo un amigo aqui en la juvenile que se llama Howard. Este vato si que come y se parece a una ballena.

En hora de comida siempre alcanzamos segunda. El se termina su primera comida y vuelve por segunda, se come la segunda y todavía se come la segunda que me dan a mí.

Este vato si que come y dice que la única hora que no le da hambre es cuando está dormido.

From The Beat: Comer mucho no es algo malo, pero si es muy malo cuando uno no se cuida su dieta. Hay comida que son dañinas y comidas que son saludable. A lo mejor deberías de aconsejar a tu amigo que haga un dieta. Recuerda que todo en exceso es malo.

My Friend Eats A Lot

I have a friend here in Juvenile Hall and his name is Howard. This dude really eats a lot and he looks like a whale.

When it is time to eat, we always get seconds. He finishes his 1st plate of food and he goes back for seconds. He eats his second plate and he still eats the second plate that they gave to me.

This dude sure can eat and he says the only time he isn't hungry is when he is sleeping.

-Alvarado B4

From The Beat: Eating a lot is not a bad thing, but it is very bad when you don't watch your diet. There are foods out there that are harmful and there are foods that are healthy. Maybe you should advise your friend to start a diet. Keep in mind that everything in excess is bad.

Odio Este Lugar

Yo ahorita me siento como un pedazo de mierda. Yo no puedo hacer nada solo pensar en salir e ir a una fiesta, comida desastrosa, mudar la misma ropa y hacer las mismas cosas diario. Estoy cansado de escuchar lo que estos manes digan y cuando estoy parado siempre me tienen la mira. El mismo olor es mal convinado con el mismo color.

Yo soy el único aqui quien tiene más libertad porque yo voy a mi escuela y sigo con mi misma amistad. Para mí todo es mal. Tengo a mi Dios quien siempre me esta mirando. Siento que cada día que regreso me estan torturando.

From The Beat: No culpamos, a nadie le gusta vivir en este lugar. Se nota que este lugar no es para ti. Si estas aqui es porque tú mismo te has puesto en esta situación. ¿Dinos cuales son tus planes para no volver a este lugar? ¿Te ayudará esta experiencia en tu futuro? Hey, tú tienes la respuesta, tú diriges tu vida, tu la manejas a tu antojo. O sea que cualquier cosa que sea tu próximo camino, sera tu decisión.

I Hate This Place

Right now, I feel like a piece of crap. I can't do anything but think about getting out and go to a party, disastrous food, wear the same clothes, and do the same things day in and day out. I'm fed up with listening to what these fools have to say, and when I am standing, they always give me the "look." The same smell is bad, combined with the same color.

I am the only one in here who has the most freedom because I go to my school and continue with my same demeanor. For me, everything is bad. I have my God who is always looking at me. I feel like every day that I go back, they are torturing me.

-Colombiando B4

From The Beat: We don't blame you: No one likes to live in this place. Based on your piece, we can tell that this place is not for you. If you are in here, it's because you yourself have put yourself in this situation. Tell us: What are your plans so you don't come back to this place? Will this experience help you out in the future? Hey, you have the answer. You direct where your life goes and you steer it as you see fit. What we're saying is, whatever your next path is, it will be your decision.

En Mi Casa

Yo estoy conviviendo con mi familia y me siento feliz y estoy divirtiendome y viendo el futbol. Voy al cine, visito a mis tíos y primos.

From The Beat: ¿Si tienes todo en tu casa, entonces que haces aqui? ¿Te has hecho esta misma pregunta?

In My House

I am living with my family and I feel happy and I am enjoying myself and watching soccer. I go to the movies, I visit my uncles and aunties, and cousins.

-Jose B5

From The Beat: If you have everything in your house, then what are you doing in here? Have you asked yourself this same question?

No Me Gusta La Cárcel

Yo quiero salir porque no me gusta a vivir en la cárcel. Yo me siento triste y no sé porque. Este lugar no es para mí.

From The Beat: ¿Entonces si no te gusta la cárcel, que haces aqui? ¿Volveras otra vez aqui?

I Don't Like Jail

I want to get out because I don't like to live in jail. I feel sad and I don't know why. This place is not for me.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: So if you don't like jail, then what are you doing in here? Will you come back to this place again?

Cuando Se Acaba El Juego

Tal vez uno se pone a jugar este juego sin pensar en las consecuencias. Este juego no se acaba hasta que uno termina en la cárcel o le pasa algo demaciado grave. Tal vez no todos podemos controlar este juego, principalmente cual se anda con las drogas o alcohol.

From The Beat: ¿Se te acabo tu juego? ¿Seguiras jugandolo después de haber terminado aqui? ¿Aprenderas algo de esta experiencia? Cuentanos amigo, queremos saber de verdad.

When The Game's Over

Perhaps one begins to play this game without thinking about the consequences. This game doesn't end until one ends up in jail or something very serious happens to them. Maybe we all can't control this game, mainly those who are into drugs or alcohol.

-Dimas B1

From The Beat: Did your game come to an end? Will you continue to play it even after having ended up here? Will you learn something from this experience? Tell us friend; we really want to know.

For me, the game already stopped because I am in jail, but I think that when I get out, I am not going to continue with the game.

Dios Me Ha Puesto Aqui

Yo pienso que aveces el juego me esta jugando porque Dios me ha puesto en este lugar. Acepto que he cometido algunos errores. Dios me ha puesto en un lugar que es como una prueba de la vida. Dios pone a las personas en lugares que algunos no queremos estar. Son como etapas que te pone la vida.

From The Beat: Si Dios te ha puesto en este lugar debe haber sido por alguna razón. ¿Cual crees que sea esa razón? Esperamos que agarres la onda y te des cuenta que tienes la oportunidad en tus manos para ser de tu vida una vida prospera. ¿Cual es tu segundo paso Luis?

God Has Placed Me In Here

I think that sometimes the game is playing me because God has placed in this place. I accept that I have committed some mistakes. God has placed me in a place that is like a test of life. God puts people in places that some of us don't want to be in. It's like stages that life puts you in.

-Luis, Marin

From The Beat: If God places you in this place, it must have been for a reason. What do you believe that reason must be? We hope that you get the hint and you realize that you have the opportunity in your hands to make your life a prosperous one. What is your second step, Luis?

El Juego Esta Controlandome

Para mí el juego está jugando conmigo porque cuando uno hace algo que no esta bueno, uno está jugando con el juego. Saben por que? Yo estaba en las calles vendiendo drogas y esto quiere decir que yo estaba jugando con el juego. Ahora que caí preso deje de jugar este juego.

También uno se puede poner a jugar con el juego porque uno no sabe lo que va a pasar cuando uno se encuentra en lugar de no poder jugar con el juego. Por ejempl: Estar en la cárcel.

Para mí, el juego ya paro porque estoy en la cárcel, pero yo pienso que cuando yo salga no voy a seguir con el juego. Un saludo a todos los Catrachos.

From The Beat: ¿Hasta ahora te has dado cuenta que el juego esta jugando contigo? ¿Cambiaran las cosas ahora que sabes que estas siendo dominado por el juego que según tú estas jugando? ¿Si piensas en no seguir con este juego, en que dedicaras tu tiempo? ¿Empezaras a ir a la escuela? ¿Buscaras un trabajo?

The Game Is Controlling Me

For me, the game is playing with me because when one does something that is not good, one is playing with the game. Do y'all know why? I was out on the streets selling drugs and this means that I was playing with the game. Now that I am locked up, I stopped playing this game.

Also, one can put his/herself in a position to start playing with the game because one doesn't know what is going to happen when one finds his/herself in a place where one can't play with the game. For example: Being in jail.

For me, the game already stopped because I am in jail, but I think that when I get out, I am not going to continue with the game. A shout-out goes out to all the Honduran people.

-Rene B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Until now you've realized that the game is playing with you? Will things change now that you know that you are being dominated by the game that you say you are playing? If you intend not continuing with this game, what are you going to dedicate your time to? Are you going to start going to school? Are you going to look for a job?

JOHN BENNETT ***Writing from California Men's Colony State Prison in San Luis Obispo, CA, John Bennett starts with a letter about his history and why that might get in the way of him staying out once he finally gets out. We loved his letter as it offered hope to the rest of us. Just because we make mistakes, even some of the same ones over and over again, we still must keep pushing through life, and hopefully we'll learn something along the way. We can see how this writer is conflicted as he concludes with a poem called Born A 'G', he leaves us wondering how this lifestyle will mesh with the fact that he wants to stay free. Well, only time will tell. In the meantime, read on and see if you learn something from John...***

Dear Beat

Now I been thinking long and hard, and hesitating for a while about writing The Beat. I wasn't sure if I had anything of value to add to these pages. And still unsure if my words will mean much to anyone, I feel almost obligated to share a little of my experiences. Tho I'm not trying to preach, I'm no better than anyone.

See as I sit here in this hole reading page after page of good literature, good poems, I can't help but be reminded of myself as a youth. In and out of Juvenile Hall, group homes, and boot camps from age 11 to 18. I, too, wrote many great poems, though I was unaware of The Beat at the time. Also they don't reach my county. (San Joaquin) But like I was saying, back then I had a bad attitude toward all this. I told mom's and my PO what they wanted to hear, and with luck I somehow avoided CYA after six program failures. (AWOL's)

I always told myself and the homies I didn't give a damn... I'll probably see the pen by the age 25. And guess what, after going to the county jail about 10 times for various shhh, the judge had enough and made my estimation reality. Now here I sit on my first term with a handful of "Shoulda-Coulda's", "What-if's", and "I wish's"!

It's not all that bad, I'll be out in a few more months to take another shot at freedom. Who knows what will happen? I don't say I'm doing this or that when I get out anymore, because it all sounds good now, but 9 times out of 10 I've lied.

It's really a shame. This all could have been avoided. We act like it's really hard to do right out there but really, I think it would be a much easier life, if I was out there raising my son, keeping a job, taking care of my girl that loves me so much. Than sitting here with anyone for 8 months now! Now that seems hard! Having to put what's going on in there before anything else, yeah that's harder than what I "could" or "should" be doing.

So I guess my message from all this is: "This really ain't where it's at loved ones!" We need to be out there with ones that need us and really care. The ones who loves us! Doing this is getting me nowhere fast! My son is going on four this year and I can say I've only been solidly in his life for about eight months two years ago. That's all bad! He deserves to know me and have a good daddy! I been with my girl going on 2 years and only been out for about 5 months of it! All bad! I been in the pen 8 months so far and have been in the oyo five months of it. All bad!

I hope and pray for all you readers to take heed and come to realize this ain't where it's at my friends. This is all bad! I pray that you guys decide to change your lives for the better before it's too late!

Now with that said, con todo resperctos extended, I'm out! Take care.

Born A 'G'

Gangstas don't cry we shed tears tattooed,
Witness peers getting buried growin' up a ghetto fool.
An' prison time ain't coo.
So many children alone,
Too many daddy's ain't gon' make it home.
They got to learn stuff on they own,
So they run out of control.
And take for granted of the youth given.
Too blind to see the future's prison,
We think this is the life
But it's life we missin',
Life we dissin',
Death we kissin'
Then in another vision,
Some might say this is the only thang.
All life had to offer was some fast money in poverty.
Had to buy my own shoes had no time for school
Or other thangs.
A lack of guidance in a cracked ghetto community.
A group of homies felt like family.
Life was cursed since before a seed.
Stuck on earth to strive thru misery.
But numb the pains of life wit' cloudy thangs,
Until there's nothing' left of me,
Get lost in madness smokin' pains away.
If tomorrow didn't come, it'd be okay.
What can I say?
Stripped of innocence since birth
Had no chance to make it work.
So in god we pray
Seekin' help ask fo' guidance then we go astray.
It makes no sense this cycle circles and it's gettin' worse. The son I love so much is someday gonna hurt.
But I'd give my life for his success.
I hope he learns from my mistakes.
I can't protect him from this earth
But I can pave a smoother way.
I got so much in my mind to say
That may never get said.
So many things I wanna do before I end up dead.
But whatever happens next I'm just gon' be me.
Can't change shhh up now
'Cause I was born to be a "G"!

This really ain't where it's at loved ones!" We need to be out there with ones that need us and really care. The ones who loves us! Doing this is getting me nowhere fast!

JAMES ***We just received this latest piece from our friend, James, via mail, who has been a loyal Beat writer and friend for well over the two and half years he has spent in the hall on this case where he is fighting for his life. Presently, James is up in the CYA while waiting for his next court date. There is so much to share about James but we'll save it for another BWO entry. James speaks loud and clear to you young readers of his piece who are mature enough to walk away form this thug/gang life. We know James would give anything to have his freedom back, meaning ridding him self of all this trouble.***

Hello Beat

Well Beat, before I take his piece any further, allow me to take the time to extend my utmost love and respect to all my lovely gente who are like myself currently finding themselves behind these brick walls and concertina topped fences. Furthermore, I hope that when these lines do meet your eyes, your familias and yourselves are in the best of God's care and health.

Well as for myself, I've been alright of course I always find myself wishing things were better but I guess I just have to sit back and watch time pass me by because unfortunately this messed up situation is out of my hands as you can see.

I was recently back in Juvenile Hall after coming back from CYA, but now I am back in CYA. I was supposed to start trial on the first but it got continued until June nineteenth. So off to CYA I go once again, 'till my court. Hopefully it starts then because I've been down now for two and a half years and as you can imagine I'm pretty tired of having to keep guessing what I'm gonna get.

You don't know how much it trips me out when I read about some homeboy or homegirl getting a program at the ranch and trippin' off if. Or when I read about some homeboy stressing because he misses his lady. On the flip side it makes me laugh too. Because why is it that when homie is out he treats his true love like garbage. But when he's in here, all of a sudden he's "Mr. Romantic."

I don't know who am I to judge though or when they get programs at the ranches and talk about running, damn locos, why can't you just do your little tiempo and be firme? Why run just to see your lady or man, when you're probably gonna see them in a month when you get your OT's anyways?

You see I'm just that homie who would like to see my gente do good. We complain about how we're harassed on the outs, well if you were the chota (cops) wouldn't it be easier to go after the gang members anyways? The people who no one wants in society? Why not be incognito? Or, if you're not "in too deep" why even continue to gangbang? Pues, I'm just speaking from what I have learned.

I've been through all that, EMP, Hall time, ranches and every time I'd fail, I would look forward to coming back to the hall because in my eyes this place was lovely, you know, kick it with the homies, get fed well, good nights rest, but now I look back to all that and I only wish I wouldn't of messed up so bad.

Now that I'm going away for the rest of my life. I only wish that I will be given that "extra chance" that I see so many homies getting. There ain't no one trying to preach either, carnales y carnalas because well shhh who am I to preach? I guess you could say this wila (letter) is one homeboy lookin out for the other homeboys and homegirls best interest.

By the time these lines do meet your eyes I'll be up in CYA again just watching time fly by in a different institution, I would break it down to how it is over there but I don't want to say one thing and go over there expecting that. Like for me personally I think CYA is wonderful but the next man could go and think it's horrible, so I'll let you homies experience it for yourselves.

Well on a closing note. To my little carnalito, keep your head up brother, not a day goes by that a firme memory of me and you doesn't cross my mind. And to all, keep your heads up and maintain, because behind these clouds is a sunbeam waiting to shine on you.

STEVE JAKU ***Some of you may know our next poet, Steve Jakul, aka Stoney, who writes us from the Sierra Conservation Center in Jamestown, CA. Once upon a time Steve was a part of the 150 Crew aka Alameda County Juvenile Hall, today he is a CDC number. Not a pretty road he has been on, but this good man has found the time to write us, to let us know his thoughts that have been lingering in his head. With that we thank you Steve for reaching out to us and we hope you won't be a stranger.***

To The Beat Within

How do all of you do this? Looks like you're non-profit. Do you take donations? What you're doing is good. If you can help just a couple of youngsters understand what is really going on it's all worth it.

Sincerely yours,

Remain Strong

Sebastian, got all day,
For you lil' homie, I pray.
To Ms. Henry and daughter I send my best,
I would send no less.
And for all the 150 Crew,
Your words have taken me to my past life.
How some of those words cut like a knife.
Dominic, what don't kill us makes us stronger.
Remain strong. Sometimes the whole world seems wrong.
To Clover, remember every dog has his day. That's all I got to say.
Terry Lynn, you're like a friend. I held your words to the end.
Because that's what it's all about, reaching out.
And last but definitely not least. Thanks to the Beat Within.
Good looking out. That's my end.
Later, Stoney

Talking to The Stars

Looking up to the sky
Glancing at the years gone by
At times it seemed I was in a war
And there were times I felt pretty poor
Not long ago I lost touch with reality
But that was just a technicality
And as I talk to the stars
I guess I'm talking to myself
At times I feel lost,
Forgotten, left on a shelf
My name is E-six-nine-seven-two-two
The recidivism rate is high
Do you even have a clue
I guess I'm talking to me
While I'm talking to you
Be done with doing time now
Or face many years of feeling blue

Take It Away

So much pain I've stashed away
I try to deny it with a bong hit or a little dirty play
Anger and fear, close and near
Rubbing up against my every day
So to this God I have, I pray
Mobbing with the homeboys
That's what it was all about
Today I'm at peace
This is where it's at
There's no doubt

CYA Business

Greetings Beat,

Q-vo, saludos with honor and a warm embracement in the fullest ranks known to man. I could only hope that this scroll reaches you in the utmost state of clarity under the guidance of the most high. Before I kick this letter off farther I would like to send my love, prayers and respect to all worthy, of my praise. I would also like to uplift "all"The Beat readers to keep writing because it is a good hobby and I would like to commend all The Beat facilitators and say keep up the hard work, for we appreciate it a lot. Thanks!

Well what I will be writing about today is CYA, a day in life in CYA. I'm going to go from beginning to end. So peep game:

Click, click, the lights turn on in the dorm. Everybody got to wake the hell up and make your beds a certain style, if you don't make it the way they want, then you get wrote up. By the way we wake up at 6:00am.

After we wake up we got to go in the day room in our boxers only. We can't take no clothes in the dorm. After the COs give us permission to get dressed we go into wash up, we brush our grills and go back to the day room.

We wait till 7:00am then we file up and head to the dinner hall on quiet. After the dinner hall we come back to the lodge. We sit there until we get called to school.

We only go to school for about two hours. We get to kick back in the class on computers listen to oldies and practice typing.

After school we walk down from the hill back to the lodge. We kick back 'till lunch. Eat lunch, wash our grills and again kick back until the next movement. We either go to they gym, lift weights, or go to the yard to play baseball or football, it all depends.

After that we head back to the lodge and me and the homeboys bust a fat ass spread and we get down and grub.

After that we chill watch a movie, the people got meds take a ride and get them.

Then dinner call, we head back to the hall eat on some jail food. Then we head back to the lodge kick back. Wait till next movement. Go outside or gym etc... Then come back, go into showers wash our asses and sit in our seats 'till night call. Then we go to sleep. Bam, that's a simple day in CYA at Preston Receiving. Well Lil' Chris from San Leandro is out, keep your heads up and stay strong. Alratos.

CHRIS GRAJEDA

It's so good to have Chris Grajeda back in the pages of The Beat Within. He is definitely a man of his word and we appreciate the effort and time he has taken to reach out to us all from his latest stop on his unfortunate incarceration tour, the California Youth Authority Receiving in Ione, CA. Chris has been a great friend of The Beat Within for years. We first met him in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150 Crew when he was a real youngsta in the little guys unit, known as B Unit. There was even a time when Chris worked in our office, despite going in and out of the hall due to his loyalty to the 'hood and the gang life. For well over the last year Chris was sharing his stories and ideas from the max unit until this most recent departure to CYA where he will be housed before going off to prison to finish off his bid. We're sure Chris will be back in these pages before you can say, "Where's my Beat?"

Fact

I'm caged in and I'm missing my folks
Times is hard and the system's no joke
Mom's is hurting 'cause I'm here and her heart is broke
I got to swallow my pride and never choke

Can't show no weakness no matter what
Got to move forward and never get stuck
Can't put myself out their, like a sitting duck
Because I refuse to be a weak minded individual
that's waiting to get plucked.

I got to survive through my time so I could hit the outs
Try to do it better this time,
to show the system what this vato's about
Gonna make it this time and that's no doubt
So just watch and keep a closed mouth

Now it's my turn to bat
I'm gonna hit a home run get out of jail and bounce back
Take advantage of my education all the knowledge I'll stack
I'm gonna better my life and that's a fact!!

TLECOLOTL GUTIERREZ

If people out there are searching for something to think about this week, you've come to exactly the right column. This writer, Tlecolotl Gutierrez, challenges the younger generation to stop and think about what they're doing before they end up his future cellmate. We witness the exchange between two different generations of people who are incarcerated through writing all the time. And each time we're left wondering what the rest of society is thinking when they place these horrendous labels on those of us who are locked up. If only they knew the power of such an experience. Well, this man, who's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, knows and we encourage you to read on because maybe then you, too, will know. We must also add, we are impressed that you mention Black Flag, very cool.

You Have A Choice

Right now I'm sitting in the ugliest prison in California and I made a choice to be here. Instead of choosing to go to school or work, I chose to run the streets. Instead of choosing to be productive in my endeavors, I chose to be negative, so here I sit inside a musky, silent prison cell for a sentence of 25 years, while outside, the world is living it up. It was my choice.

Everyday I wake up to the same nightmare. Everyday I'm spending my best years in darkness, all because of choices. The reason I'm writing this is so that I can add to the seeds of positivity dropped in the fertile Earth of your mind.

You see, the situation is that y'all don't know me, I don't know y'all, but one thing that we have in common is the ability to choose a better life, so I'm doing the only thing I can at this point in time. Writing this letter to y'all through "The Beat," in hopes that y'all will be able to make better choices before you end up here with all the broken, wasted lives. Not that you couldn't make it. Not that you couldn't survive this, but believe me; this is not no way to live. You have a choice.

To those who are lacking guidance or direction, I know you look up to the older heads out there who are having their way and doing their dirt, and getting away with it, but you have a choice. There are just as many older heads out there who are having their way, doing their thing in a positive manner and living their lives to the fullest.

To those who are suffering from depression because of family problems, get some help. Don't turn to drugs in order to numb the pain. You shut your brain down, for what? To get caught slipping? The chemicals used to make crystal-meth are the kind that cause brain damage, so while you smoke crystal, you think, "Damn, I'm on top of the game," but in reality, people look at your teeth and they are yellow and your hair is thinner on top!

Now that I've been off crystal a couple of years, I can look back and see that it was at the time, depression and a lack of guidance that I was struggling with, and making bad choices put me behind bars for 25 of the last years of my life. That's it. Like the song by "Black Flag," "Retired at 21."

I'm in a position to warn you. Use your brain that God gave you. If you choose not to, well, in the end, your brain will be the only thing that helps you survive this, so either way, you're gonna mind somebody. Make the choice now before it's too late and before you end up studying law to save your own life with no guarantee.

Now, let me expose you to this. An educated mind has the ability to make better choices and informed decisions. The choice is yours. There are a lot of inmates going to school here. Grown men who skipped class on the streets only to go to school in the joint. It's kinda funny, but they ain't laughing. Another funny thing is people who sold dope on the streets. Now they're making picture frames in prison. Now they sell those things they can make, in the joint, to get by. Imagine that.

Listen Up!

These few lines
To send mines
I send out my prayers
To those who have
fallen on hard times
And to my future
cellie
I'm saving you a spot
'Cause if you don't
straighten up
You gonna get got
No, don't get this
wrong
I ain't trying to hate
Just so you'll know
You got a choice to
make
If you listen to the
angels
You'll get a Range
Rover
Girls coming over
Four leaf clovers
If you listen to the
devils
You're coming to see
me
All concrete sleep
Time to grit your teeth
No, don't get this
wrong
There's plenty of time
I got about 26 to go,
So I could spare a
dime
So listen up
Listen up....
Listen up....

FRANK RAMOS

Just in time, Frank Ramos (Solomon) sends this heartfelt tribute to his mother for Mother's Day. The Beat was too late this year with our "Mother's Day" topic, so this wonderful poem — part apology for being the source of tears, part awe in the accomplishments of a single mother, part pure love and gratitude for all she's done and all she's put up with — will have to serve as a stand-in for all who cannot tell their mothers "Happy Mother's Day" face to face. We know that everyone reading this poem will recognize at least some of their own experiences and emotions in relation to the most deserving but longest suffering person in their lives — their mothers. The wise Solomon writes us from the California State Prison in Lancaster from which, we are happy to announce, he is about to be paroled... (With any luck, we'll see him in our offices real soon...)

Nothin' Compares

Many dine and dance,
Maybe ornaments for wrist and hands...
But what do you give the woman —
The only woman who knows and understands?

Sure, you can take them out and get them a makeover
Having Moms look like she came straight out of Vanity Fair!
But everything is slight in comparison
Because to a Mother's love, nothing else can compare!

I mean, what gift could I possibly give you
When you gave me life?
And how can I explain what you mean to me
When it seems all I cause you is strife?

They say hope floats and you hold tight
Knowing it's the only thing that will save me!
All you wanted is a son you could be proud of
Not one who would abuse every blessing God gave me!

Momma, your lil' boy's sick, but he ain't got cancer!
Everybody wants to know why, but only God has the answer
And you know I've tried... even though some say to this point I'm just a failure...
And even though there might be contributing factors,
I can't blame no one else for my behavior!

How can I ever repay you
For all the love, mercy and forgiveness you've shown me?
At night when I fall apart, it's your love
That puts me back together and consoles me!

You gave me life... I give you strife...
And you don't deserve that!
I'm sorry Mama, for all the drama
And for being such a dirt bag!

My papa was a rolling stone...
The bastard was never there!
Yet you provided a happy home
And overcame odds with just a pair

Two aces, one queen
The other a spade...
One college educated, and the other...
Still finding his way!

But you didn't find, you made yours...
Kicked down walls and made doors!

Went from ghetto to ghetto...
From food stamps, rusted Impala, and foot cramps!
From beans and rice, late rent and flees and lice!
From candy cane and one-night stands...
No direction and from no damn plans!

Went from too much worry to success and glory!
From not having a damn thing to doing the damn thing...
Rejoicing and dancing, candle light and romancing!
Soul survivor, not a casualty of war...
Brand new car paid for!

Went from rice and beans to rice and beans and steak...
To vacationing and sun bathing in the lower 48
To overcoming and diamonds gleaming...
To reality and no more dreaming...
To two condos and to achieving!

Went from no damn plans and a broken heart
To middle class and a man who stands apart
I remember where we came from and I look at you now...
I gotta let my Mami know... her son's so damn proud!

I've made many promises before, yet not one have I kept
If I had one wish, it would be that no more tears be wept...
I don't want to make you cry no more Mommy
I don't want to make you sad...
I just want to wish you a Happy Mother's Day
And pray it will be the best that you ever had!

Again, I have to pay for my mistakes...
Again, another day spent physically apart...
But we will be together for in your hands you got a piece of me
\and you I always carry in my heart...

Happy Mother's Day, mi Madre Querida
From Your Boy —
A boy whose heart bleeds ink...
Hear its beat...

Went from rice and beans to rice and beans and steak...

LIL' SPANKS

We hear about what this next writer wrote about all the time. You know, people getting locked up and finding God. And though we know that some are genuinely on spiritual path to greatness, we also know that some are just fakin' it 'til they make it. These are the people that this next writer speaks of. If we're not mistaken, Lil' Spanks was once a Beat writer out of San Mateo's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall or was it Santa Clara County? "Not All, Just Some" may cause some to get defensive, but hey, what can we say, The Beat breeds strong beliefs. Lil' Spanks is writing us from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

Not All, Just Some

Man! These jail house Christians a trip
One minute preachin' the Bible,
The next searchin' for a heroin fix
I sit back laughing
At them hypocrite asses
Not all just some, they know who they is
Flop, hustle to cop and flip
Save your breath
'Cause my ears are closed for that shhh
I see this happen everyday
And it makes me doubt everything that they say
One day full of good graces, God's praises and love
But the next , they're at the dope man's crib
Exchanging TV's and radios for a taste of some drugs
Now I'm not saying I'm any better
I smoke that crystal substance
Methamphetamines, makes my ears ring, body ting,
And I'm lovin' the shhh
That I admit
But I don't fiend like some of these dudes
Steady cluckin' their shhh
I'm not doggin' any religious beliefs
But some of the cats don't belong on the Christian side
It's a front to get by
Ain't no such thing as fighting the temptations
When you undercover getting high
Believe that!
Wearin' long sleeves to hide all your bruises and tracks
Like water you see through
10 - 15 dudes just hit
And you askin' for the same damn needle
Hepatitis-C runs wild in this world so small
And these cats don't trip,
But don't forget to clean up
That little river of blood runnin' down your arms.
Not all, just some.

BERNARD *'The Problem' is that there's all this great talent in the world and all we can seem to do is lock it up. This next writer is an amazing poet and though we haven't heard from him in a while, we are still happy to receive love from him. As of the moment he's writing from The California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA. And hopefully 'the woman called "Sensation," isn't keeping him to sensory deprived. Try to stay at us Bernard, last name withheld, we enjoy hearing from you.*

The Problem

A medical doctor said there was nothing he could do.
But he knew someone who could help if I wanted them to.
The psychiatrist said my problem he knew all about,
the psychologist said it was up to me to find the answer out.
The neurologist said psychologically I must be creating the problem in my head.
There was nothing he could do but refer me instead.
The counselor said he would help me any way he could.
The therapist said that all things could be understood.
The nurse said she would call the doctor and see what he had to say.
That programming was something that I should get involved with right away.
Theorizing, the doctor said would bring changes about;
The orderly said it would help me think things out.
Friends said that I would soon be alright,
Hospital personnel said that I was winning the fight.
Progress notes said that I was doing just great,
Records showed that I had received help before it was too late.
Medical journals said that drugs would be the best,
College students wanted to know if they could run some tests.
The doctor said he knew what my problem was all about.
Yet, through it all… My problem was left out.

A Woman Called Sensation

While standing at the crossroads pondering
Which way to go someone counted my virtues,
Who it was I didn't know.
Oh, how smart and straight and handsome
Were the words I heard her use;
Such a shame to have life's ransom
Cause your soul to sing the blues.
As I paused to draw the sweetness
From the words I heard her say
I could feel in my completeness
All resolution melt away,
And the tones of her expression
Cast a spell upon my mind
As she mixed me up a potion
Of a very special kind.
I could not refuse the offer to stay with her awhile.
If I'd only known the difference.
Twixt Love-and wicked while,
If I'd only known that waiting
At the crossroads meant damnation,
On that day my will was taken
By a woman called Sensation…
Every time I tried to leave her to go back and face the fight,
She would tempt me with her potion
That made every wrong seem right.

The psychiatrist said my problem he knew all about
The psychologist said it was up to me to find the answer out.

NUV *Mother's Day is coming up this Sunday so this next writer is right on time with this flow. And not only is he punctual, but he also is a really profound artist. After reading the tribute to his mother, who we're sure is an incredible woman to have birthed such talent, we wanted to get a hold of our own mothers and tell them how much we love them. If your mother is around, maybe you should show her some love. If you don't know how, read on and get some tips from NUV. He's writing from State Prison in Corcoran, CA.*

Mama

Verse One:
You raised me as a child
And mom I love you for that
And I know it was hard
You deserve a pat on the back…
And there will never ever be
A woman special as you
Cause you're a one of a kind
And mom you know that is true…
And yeah I know that everyday
You have a smile on your face
No matter what you go through
Your smile is always in place…
So always know my special mother
You're my only true friend
And I will cherish you mom
Yup,
All the way to the end…

Chorus:
Sitting by the window
Thinking of my mom
And I'm looking right at her picture
While my heart is longing for mom's
But I know one day it will all be great
When I see my mom again…
I know lord
That you'll let me see
You'll let me see her again

Verse Two:
Even though I'm locked up mom
I still shed a tear
Cause just a thought of you gone
Is something I always fear
And mom, you really need to know
That I can't live without you…
You're my pillar at heart
And mom my every breath too…
So always know that I'll be praying
To the Lord up above
That I will see you once again
Before your spirit's a dove
So always know your baby boy
Is always thinking of you
And holding every moment close cause
I really love you…

Chorus:
Sitting by the window
Thinking of my mom
And I'm looking right at her picture
While my heart is longing for mom's
But I know one day it will all be great
When I see my mom again…
I know lord
That you'll let me see
You'll let me see her again

Verse Three:
Thing's are always changing
But you're always the same
And mom I'm very, very sorry
For always causing you pain
So mom I'm asking for forgiveness
From the depth of my heart
So please forgive your baby boy
And let us never depart…
Because the Lord has given me
Only you for a mom
That's why I'm taking up this time
To write my mother this song
So now I'm gonna end this verse
With a valuable touch
And let you know my special mother
That I love you so much…

Chorus:
Sitting by the window
Thinking of my mom
And I'm looking right at her picture
While my heart is longing for mom's
But I know one day it will all be great
When I see my mom again…
I know lord
That you'll let me see
You'll let me see her again

PAUL JAY REED ***Although Paul Jay Reed is no longer in jail, when he was, he met a fellow prisoner — B — who inspired this piece. We must confess, at the beginning we thought we were about to get an essay on homophobia and intolerance. (And, in truth, we would love to see that theme developed by one who thinks as deeply and writes as well — and with so much compassion — as Paul Reed.) But as the piece developed, it turned into something quite different: a long lamentation over the lost art of joyous living! (We're not sure, however, if B was the best example for his theme since the loss of B's truck may only be an excuse for a deeper sadness that comes from being alone and friendless — not because of anything he's done, but merely because of who he is.) But that aside, once again Paul Reed has given us some profound insights into life to think about. Paul is no longer in the Texas jail where he met B. He now writes in freedom from the Texas Gulf Coast.***

Joie de Vivre

"Why are you so unhappy? Because 99% of the things you do, think, and feel are about yourself." Wee Wu Wei

"The great use of life is to spend it for something that will outlast it." William James

A couple of weeks ago a new inmate entered our dorm. Whenever someone new comes to jail, he is automatically sized up by the extant inmate population. It wasn't very long before this guy's effeminacy was discovered and word circulated that we had a homosexual in our midst. The majority of men here are so sensitive about their manhood that they wear it on their shoulders, and the presence of an obviously gay man became an open threat to their manhood.

It amazes me how one person's sexual preferences can cause so many to feel uncomfortable about their own manhood. One guy rushed to inform me, "Say, that new dude's a punk!" I responded, "Does that make him any less of a man than the rest of us?" They guy, startled by my response, replied, "Well, I guess not." The new guy hasn't made many friends here, and spends most of his time along, buried in novels. Few are willing to be seen talking to him.

A few days after his arrival, a tragic story appeared on the evening news. A little girl was run over by a truck by a man police believe may have been intoxicated. The accident occurred in the projects. The girls was severely injured but survived, fortunately. It became the talk of the tank.

Two days after this tragedy, the gay man, "B" was called down to book-in. when he returned, he appeared shaken by something. He came out to the smoke pen, sat on the bench near me, pulled his knees up to his chest, and began to sob convulsively. Something was deeply troubling him and, as I watched him, my heart went out to him. Others noticed it too, but pretended to not see him.

He called over one of our religious extremists to talk to. OK, Beat readers, I was eavesdropping (what we call
"ear-hustlin'"), but I wanted to know what was troubling the man. Honestly…
It's not unusual when people are troubled, they turn to those who are religious for comfort and support. So the religious extremist-jailhouse preacher came and sat beside him, but not too close, being mindful that others were watching.

"What's up? W's wrong? Why are you crying, Brother? Did you just get indicted?" asked the preacher.

"No," B answered, trying to control his sobs.

"Did they deny your bond, or put a new case on you?" he tried again.

"No," B said again.

"Well, what's wrong then?"

B began to tell the preacher his troubles, as I pretended to not be listening.

"Do you remember that story on the news the other day? About the little Black girl who was hit by a truck?"

The preacher thought about it. "I think so. Yeah. Was it you who did it?"

"No," B replied. "But… but it was my truck… My truck! It was my roommate driving it." (I assumed, lover.) Now it's over. They just called me down to tell me it was my truck used in the accident!"

The preacher then asked, "They're not trying to say you did it, are they?"

"No. but my truck is totaled. It's over. I know he did it on purpose to hurt me. he had no right! He doesn't give a shhh about me or anything I care about."

Then the preacher interrupted him and began a brief sermonette followed by a three-minute prayer/sermon to God on B's behalf. And before B could say anything else, the preacher informed him he had to go assemble the brothers together for their nightly prayer circle and didn't have time to finish his counseling session. He left without looking back or extending an invitation for B to join his group. As the preacher departed, I couldn't help noticing that B continued to sit with his knees against his chest, but with a look of dejection. He wanted empathy, but got an empty sermon instead. He wanted someone to listen to him, but got a sermon instead. He wanted comfort and support, but got a sermon instead.

The following morning, as I sat in the smoke pen taking in some fresh air, B came out and again sat next to me. I could tell he wanted to talk. He looked over towards me and said, "Hey, did you watch the news the other night? About the little girl who got hit by the truck?"

I nodded, affirming that I had. I knew where this was going, but wanted B to get it out in his own way. So I sat and listened as he retold the entire story, as if I hadn't heard it the previous night.

When he finished, he concluded, "You know why I'm so hurt? That truck was all I had in the entire world, and now it's totaled. I have nothing left in life, period." Then he thought about what h3e'd just said and, not wanting me to think him unsympathetic, said, "Oh, what happened to that little girl is terrible. I'm sorry that it happened to her. but she didn't die, thank God. But my truck is gone. I have nothing left in this entire world."

I was content just listening to B, but after he finished, he looked at me as if waiting for my response.

I said, "OK, your truck is totaled, and you say it's over for you because it's all you had in the entire world. That's not true. You have your life and health and, as long as you are still breathing, you have a chance to experience happiness. You can always get another truck."

B retorted, "My health? Hah! I have a disease that's killing me." without speculation which disease, I asked, "Can you name one person in here who isn't dying, or anyone, for that matter, who won't die?"

"That's true," he said. "But I'm dying faster."

I went on. "Look, B, the fact is we are all going to die and none of us knows exactly when. You could easily outlive me. Hell, I could die of a heart attack tomorrow, for all we know. You will probably outlive most of the guys in here who constantly expose themselves to the drugs and violence on the streets. He point is, right now, right here, you are still breathing. Right now is all we really have. We can only make the most of each moment, right?"

To this he agreed. Later that day I gave him a chapter to read out of Bo Lozoff's book, Just Another Spiritual Book. After reading about how others faced worse misfortunes, he seemed to lighten up a bit. He thanked me, but before returning the book, he op3ened it to the chapter he'd just read and pointed to a line that talked about Karma. He said, "You know, I know we all get another chance at life, but sometimes that chance comes too late."

When I think about what B is experiencing, I realize that he is no different from millions of others. He is lacking something essential to human existence. It isn't his truck or lover. On the surface, it may appear that way. The problem is much deeper. He, like so many others, is missing a sense of joi de vivre.

Joie de vivre (pronounced zwad veave) is a French phrase that has been incorporated into the English language. Roughly translated, it is "joy of living." The dictionary defines it as joyous living. It is a beautiful, powerful phrase, though seldom used by most Americans.

Joie de vivre describes a state of being. It is a sense of profound wholeness. When I think of joie de vivre, I think of a glass of champagne, bubbling and spilling over the rim of a glass, running down onto the table. This is how human life was meant to be experienced — with joie de vivre. It is what King David describes in Psalms 23, "my cup runneth over."

Joie de vivre is an attitude toward life, a belief in the inherent goodness of each moment of existence. It doesn't depend on the state of our health, whether we're accepted by others, or whether we're free or locked up. It is our relationship with life, and it cannot be bought or sold; it must be grasped.

Let's face it, too many of us are not living joyously. If I were to ask he average person here, "Are you happy," most would respond, "How can I be happy locked up?" That comes from a fundamental misunderstanding of the question. Having joy has nothing to do with where you're at. And if you think being on the outside is so joyous, then ask yourself, why are millions of people using drugs, both legal and illegal, just to make it through each day? Why are so many people committing suicide, especially teenagers? And, judging from the many pieces I reading The Beat, many of you weren't living joyous lives out there.

Sure, you may say, "if I could just get out of here today, I'll be happy." But how happy were you the last time you were out? Many of the pieces I read reveal the anger, anguish, pain, frustration, loneliness, and sense of hopelessness you were living with out there. There was so little joy that many of us were trying to replace it with drugs, violence, and sex. While getting high may temporarily release our inhibitions and help us forget — or ignore — our problems, how long is it before the effect of the drugs wears off and we're stuck right back in the same position, and often worse off than before? Violence may give us a sense of power for the moment, but no amount of pain and suffering we cause others can make our own pain go away. Taking someone's life won't make our own lives more worth living. Sex feels good, but a few moments of orgasmic pleasure cannot bring lasting joy.

The consumer industry promises us that we can be happy if we drive the right cars, wear certain clothes and tennis shoes, adorn ourselves with jewelry. As a result, millions of Americans are slaving themselves away, trying to buy some joy, being pimped by

continued on next page

continued from previous page

advertisers.

I recently saw a commercial for a car that claims once behind the wheel, you'll "Feel the power, the comfort and control." One ice cream commercial offered a "taste of the goodness of life." And it gets worse! One advertisement for sanitary napkins promises that women can experience the freedom of being a woman. My God! Are we so gullible that we believe cars, ice cream and sanitary napkins can give us the power, comfort, goodness and freedom we long for?

Besides the ridiculous standard set by the consumer industry, our modern culture has established a standard of beauty that leaves us discontented with our own unique individual qualities. It's impossible to flip through a magazine without running into ads for breast enlargements, penile enlargement, miracle hair growth, growth hormones, etc. it has us looking into the mirror looking for faults in the way God made us, and these advertisements claim they can fix what God has messed up. And when we find ourselves lacking all these things that are supposed to make us happy, we end up living in an existential void, the class Kierkegaardian "sickness unto death."

To B, life has lost all meaning because he's lost his truck. But no truck can fill the empty void of a joyless life.

When is the last time you read an obituary? An obituary is a short biography of the deceased. It attempts to sum up a person's life: his surviving relatives, educational achievements, employment, and the impact his life had on others. I haven't run across one yet that tells me how much money a person made, the type of cars he drove, how many women he slept with, did he wear name-brand shoes... Why? Because in the end, we will be remembered for the type of characters we were, and what type of impact we made on society.

If you died today, what would your obituary say? In fact, pretend you have just died and write your own obituary... What can you say about yourself? What outstanding achievements would you have left behind? What type of impact did you have on society?

In the late 1800s, a man named Alfred woke up one morning and was flipping through the newspaper. He opened to the obituary section and was stunned by what he saw: He was listed in the obituaries as being dead! To be sure, someone had made a mistake, assuming he had died. As he read his obituary, Alfred became depressed. In a few short paragraphs, his life had been summed up. He realized as he read it that he had not achieved anything worthwhile other than holding a job and paying on a mortgage; other than that, little else could be said about him. That morning changes his life. He made a commitment to live for a higher purpose, to leave something behind that would outlast him and make a positive impact on the world. And to encourage others to begin living like this, this man, Alfred Bernhard Nobel, created the Nobel prize, recognizing the outstanding achievements of men and women around the world who have made a positive impact on society in every area, from science to literature.

Go back and reread the two quotes at the beginning of this piece. Think about it. Have you ever met a selfish, self-centered person who was happy? Sages from every era and religious tradition have reminded us that if we are to achieve joie de vivre, we must live selflessly and for a higher purpose. They have told us that we must look beyond ourselves; life is much bigger than our needs and possessions.

Like B, so many of us have not found anything higher to live for other than automobiles, clothes, tennis shoes, jewelry, and attractive lovers. But trucks break down, clothes become outdated, tennis shoes wear out, and lovers abandon or die on us. If we haven't discovered something higher, more lasting to live for, then, when we lose these objects, our lives miserably fall apart. This is why Jesus told his followers to not lay up treasures that can corrode or be taken away, but to store up heavenly treasures — live for a higher purpose.

I'm not surprised by the lack of joie de vivre I see around here. Most men plan to get out, get a woman, a car, make some money, buy an outfit, get high, get some J's, and hit the strip. After spending months and years incarcerated, this is all they want out of life. That's not joy.

Life is bigger than a $200 pair of Jordan's and a nice car with a system. If that's all you want out of life, then that's all you'll get. But when they put you in the coffin, you go barefoot.

Seldom have I seen men in here caring about and helping each other. Most of the time they use each other to get what the want, which is indicative of the selfish, narcissistic ideas they live by. I believe this is why so many of us are so unhappy, whether we're locked up or not. I encourage anyone who reads this to try looking at the needs of others around you and ask yourself how you can serve them. I promise you — as I have learned — something happens when you stop making yourself the central focus of all your efforts. We all want to be wanted and need to be needed. And believe it or not, the world needs us.

With all of the poverty, depression, violence, bitterness in the world, how can you make a difference? I seldom hear people talking about getting out and giving themselves to helping others.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said we all have a drum major instinct, the need to lead the parade and be recognized as great. Jesus gave the formula for achieving such lofty goals: if any among you desires to be great, let him first serve others. That's a powerful but true paradox.

To those of us who live life in the shallow waters of trying to satisfy ourselves only, life is "a brief candle," as Shakespeare described in "Macbeth," but to those who live unselfishly, for a higher purpose, it is a flaming torch!

* * *

"This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not deviate itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live.

"Life is no 'brief candle' to me. it is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

George Bernard Shaw

PAUL JAY REED (CONT.)

RON KEY

We welcome the thoughtful poetry of Ron Key who delivers his first entry to The Beat Within from the SHU in Corcoran State Prison. We do not know too much about this author, but we are grateful that he found the courage in his soul to share some of his thoughts for us all.

Beat

To the people of the Beat Within, my name is Ron Key. I'm currently at California State Prison Corcoran. I've been here in the SHU (Security Housing Unit) for over one-year. About two weeks ago, some one let me read one of your magazines. It was good to hear some of the poetry. I was wondering if maybe I could send some of mine. It's more or less "wisdom from an older Beat Within".

Reason

Reason is a choice. Wishes and whims are not facts,
nor are they a means to discourage them.
Reason is our only way of grasping reality.
It's our basic tool of survival.
We are free to evade the effort of thinking, to reject reason,
but we are not free to avoid the penalty of the abyss we refuse to see.
If we fail to use reason in our struggles,
if we close our eyes to the reality of what is in favor of what we would wish,
then we will die in this, and for nothing.
We will be but more among uncounted and nameless corpses
beneath the gray, gloomy decay of mankind.
In the darkness that will follow,
our bones will be meaningless dust.

This is a piece of wisdom for everyone in prison, jail, juvenile, CYA, or wherever they put us. This is going to be the most frustrating difficult, annoying thing we've ever done in our life. And that not the way it should be.

Well with that said, I'll leave you, but before I forget if The Beat Within is a free publication could you send me a copy, thank you.

Please excuse the writing I'm writing with a broke hand and pen filler, thank you.

RAY SANCHEZ ***JR. Our old friend, Ray Sanchez Jr. steps up in a timely manner with his latest commentary, "American Divided." Ray weighs in his thoughts on the latest controversy stirring the United States of America, immigration. We urge and encourage all of you writers to share your thoughts on this hot button issue. Your thoughts and opinions do matter and we are listening, thanks Ray! Ray also includes a letter to all Beat readers that in many ways is equally a hot topic and that is taking responsibility for your actions, as he focuses in on young women and the media. Ray Sanchez writes The Beat Within from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. We so appreciate what our friend is sharing and always look forward to more work from this thoughtful young man.***

America Divided
(A Personal Opinion)

In the midst of a paranoid, politically correct America, thousands of Latinos protest legislature that will make the aiding and, or harboring of "illegal aliens" well illegal. A felony to be exact. More so, it will be a felony to be a non-citizen - I like that term better - in America without proper documentation. War and bio-terrorism are the excuses bandied about and extremists on both sides argue over the rightness or wrongness of these new immigration laws.

Is securing our border racist? Many think so. Many others disagree. I am going to share my viewpoint on the racial aspects of these possible laws and on immigration in general. These are simply my views and I mean no disrespect to anyone, nor am I trying to curry favor for any political party, view, or race.

The fact that America's border with Mexico is used to smuggle drugs, criminals, guns, and thousands of migrant workers each day is real. So why not a new strain of tuberculosis? Why not terrorists themselves? This is the fear many politicians share. Others use this fear to screen their own racial motives. These racial undercurrents are picked up by the Latino community and leftists, democrat extremists. Let me say now, I am totally against making any undocumented non-citizen a felon, or anyone who aids that person a felon. It is morally wrong! This part of the legislature is racially biased. But what's worse is that it's inefficient. It's closing the garage after your car's stolen. What I also agree with is the securing of America's borders. I understand many people flee here searching for a better life. This is America's timeless purpose. It's what the country is founded in. I believe not in denying that dream to decent people, but ensuring it is not raped by the intentions of those who would do harm to our home.

I have stated that America is going about it in an inefficient way now allow me to demonstrate why. By securing our borders – not with the added Border Patrol Agents congress wants. But with the technology (cameras, ground radars, walls, satellite surveillance) we have – we stop excessive immigration immediately and are able to lower the amount of drug shipments radically. We will no longer fill our prisons with people who have done no real crime to begin with, or deport gang related criminals only to have them return later. We will shut down the "coyotes" who exploit migrant workers. And we then become able to monitor who comes in and out. We protect ourselves.

Please note I did not say to stop immigration. I said monitor it. Everyone is entitled to a better life. That's why we give so much money to foreign nations that need help I don't know why though, when we can barely help ourselves.

As for those who would be in the United States already. Let 'em remain. Let them work and provide for their families, earn citizenship. Let them obtain the dream the white ancestors of many politicians realized. You want to deport someone? Deport the flagrant criminals who refuse to better themselves. If they choose not to earn citizenship then that's their choice. Let them live with it in their own countries. Citizenship, is conditional, if you want it, if you want to live in a country, you should abide by its laws. Plain and simple.

Many pundits, or supporters if you prefer, for this new legislation would have you believe that "Mexicans are lazy…"or" take up jobs belonging to Americans…" this my friends, is bull shhh. The migrant workers of California have long been the backbone of American Agriculture. They relentlessly toil in the fields. Many Latin mothers work as maids, cleaning up American waste. Countless sons work minimum wage jobs just to send money home to their families. Latinos, especially migrant workers, are hard-workers, often taking the jobs white, or any other American for that matter, don't want.

Many government officials would argue that by opening a new "bracero program," or migrant worker program, we would be allowing American dollars to leave our nation along with the workers as they return home to Mexico at the end of the picking seasons. Newsflash: That money is leaving anyway! You might as well choose who it leaves with and ensure it's not being misused by the criminal element. Other officials believe if we secure our borders too much we hurt our economy by taking away the main source of American's manual labor, the migrant worker. This is also a misconception. As previously stated, if we allow the undocumented Mexican Nationals who are already here to remain, - on the condition they don't rack up a score of felonies - our labor force will remain intact. Add to this the additional benefit of a secure border and a drastically reduced flux in returning criminals and narcotics trafficking, you have a win-win situation.

American stands divided on this issue and many others. Whether it's industry or environment, punishment or rehabilitation, or Roe vs. Wade, this nation has petitioned for one extreme or another. Rarely do we hear the voice of those who wish a compromise. George Wilhelm Hegel, a prominent philosopher, laid his claim to fame was his formula which stated for ever standpoint, or thesis, there must be an anti-thesis just as there is yin and yang, north pole and south pole, one can not exist without the other. They compliment each other. But only when there is a compromise (synthesis) that takes the best elements of both standpoints can there be forward movement, until the process begins all over again. As a nation we have let our pride and righteous beliefs retard this needed synthesis. We believe we're right and no one else, refusing to concede any points to the opposition. This legislature on immigration is no exception.

This is my plea to you, the youth who will one day lead this great country, to always listen with open ears, see with open eyes, and feel with an open heart. Always research the facts for yourself and make up your own mind. Be willing to reach a compromise, keeping in mind that what you need is not always what you want. You are the future. And I'd like to believe that our nations future is bright, shining, and undivided.

This is my plea to you, the youth who will one day lead this great country, to always listen with open ears

To Whom It May Concern

Off top, I send my utmost love and respect to all those who make this wonderful medium, we call The Beat Within, possible. I hope that you receive this letter in the best of health and spirits.

I got something to say that's been bugging me lately. And it has to do with how women are objectified. And, how they aren't actually objectified... but still want to yell out that they were (are).

Today on "Oprah" yes, "Oprah," it was the only thing on TV at the time, okay! The topic was how the media was brainwashing today's young girls. How they are turning America's teens into, as pop star "Pink" states, "stupid girls."

It seems America's moms are pissed off that teen idols such as Paris Hilton, Linsey Lohan, and rap "video-hoes" seem to put value in the right clothes, the right car, he right boob job, and the amount of sexuality that is put out there. Ex-video vixens are writing books on how they were taken advantage of, of the sexual pressures put on 'em. Yeah, all that oppressive stuff.

Do I agree with these grievances? Umm, to a certain degree. I'll explain.

First off, sex sells. We gotta realize that magazines that depict women with perfect bodies, such as "Playboy" and "Maxim," are not out there to brainwash teenage girls. "Girls Gone Wild" is not part of a huge conspiracy to make our daughters a bunch of freaks. These things are simply there to entertain. They're there to sell me a fantasy. That's all. There's a huge market for these things for the same reason "strippers" are frequently visited by married men: Men are horny dogs...period. But do we create videos, magazines, movies, and other skin-displaying medium to make girls conform to our fantasies? Of course not! We're not super-villains, damn it.

Ya see, women are pointing fingers at people like "Little Kim," and videomakers like the guys at "Girls Gone Wild," and saying, "It's your fault my kid is so materialistic, and has such low-self-esteem!" This is a big mistake. Whose fault is it then? The parents', duh?

Parents are - or at least, are suppose to be - a child's first teacher and role model. It's up to the parent to tell their daughter, "I know these girls are beautiful and guys like their bodies, but that's not how you should see your self. You are more than a body, whether perfect or imperfect. You are more than your wardrobe. These images are there to sell something, and you don't need to sell yourself based on your looks, or how sexy you are willing to be, because you are better than that. You are not an advertisement and are not a piece of ass to be oggled by horny little boys!"

Parents like to point at outside influences for their child's faults because it allows them to ignore their lack of attention in their child's life. It's irresponsible. If we teach our kids that rap videos represent the grimy life the rapper lived, a life that revolved around crime, money, and sex, and is not actually a positive goal to look forward to, we can bring understanding to our kids. We can show them how these things may be entertaining and fun to look at or fantasize about, but are unrealistic and eventually do lead to people seeing them as nothing more than an object, a piece of ass. It leads to hollow goals that can only be achieved through humiliation and prostituting ones self worth. It's time to take responsibility for our actions as parents.

RAY SANCHEZ (CONT.)

I'm tired of hearing grown women cry about how they were objectified while working in raunchy rap videos. I'm tired of hearing them blame everyone but them selves. What crap is that? No one put a gun to their head and said "Dance in a thong for money!" it was a choice made by a grown adult. What's worse is that their claim that they were objectified is negated by the fact that they suddenly write a "tell-all" book about this experience. They always forget to disclose the fact that they get paid for this book. Their motives are tainted. They made their choices, then want to come out and become a spokesperson for women's rights. I'm sorry, but even though I'm sympathetic to any hardships they endured, I'm still suspicious of their sudden conversion.

And still, there are those girls who actually are taken advantage of. Who are misled into humiliating videos and photos. This is a real thing. It does happen. But once again, it is a problem that can be corrected through parent/guardian intervention. If we take the time to install morals in our kids, and explain the reasons for these sexual mediums in a mature, sympathetic, and authoritative manner, we can ensure our nieces, daughters, sisters, and cousins won't ever feel the degrading scars of being nothing more than some guy's sexual tool.

And you girls who already have been there, you ain't gotta go back to that life. You are worthy of more than a twenty dolla bill for a lap dance, yaddadamean? Why rely on a man to give up his paycheck when you can cut him out and get your own dough-low? That is true empowerment. Being self-reliant. You may think you trickin' these lames out thei' loot, but you's just trickin' ya self, ma. Maybe it's time you wake up to the risk factor of your actions and be your own boss.

This is a message I'm constantly putting out there. Take responsibility. You're not blaming, you're empowering you're saying "Yeah, I effed up...But I can fix it." And we all know our lives need a lil' fixin'.

To all you young parents, I pray you take what I say to heart. Please stop blaming the ghetto, the gang, or the game. None of that matters. What matters is what you're doing today to make the future better for you and yours. Good Luck and God Bless, y'all.

Your friend...

JOHN THOMPSON

This first time writer sends us a very short poem about prison time. Hopefully, he'll find time to write more next time, yet his short poem hits hard and makes one think about time. John Thompson writes from the California State Prison in Represa, CA.

Prison Time

23 hour lockdown,
1380 minutes caged in,
82,800 seconds of isolation,
Lonely days and secluded nights
In solitary,
No money for commissary,
Dead to the world.

-Amen

Parents like to point at outside influences for their child's faults because it allows them to ignore their lack of attention in their child's life. It's irresponsible.

YOUNG SNEAKS

Though he introduces himself in his letter to us, which we are publishing, we thought we should say a thing or two about this amazing writer. Well, we first met Young Sneaks in San Francisco's Juvenile Hall and now he's writing to us from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. He drops a heavy hitting letter and three amazing poems on us. Our personal favorite being 'In My World' where he describes the reality of being where he is with one of the most important traits you can possess as a poet — elegance. Read on and tell us what your favorite is. Keep up the great writing... can't wait to hear from you again.

Dream Lovers

Seduce me with your words
Attack my blinded spirit
Hold me hostage in your heart
Where no hatred can go near it
Tame me and enslave me
You demonic puppet master
Enjoy me as your toy
But trade places with me after
You're the quintessence of perfection
A paragon of beauty
An undiscovered rose
That nature keeps eluded
But I would keep your secret, too
Yes, you'd be my guilty pleasure
But from here, I can only dream of you
Damn, these dreams don't last forever....

In My World

In my world where bravado matters
Sharpened steel causes blood to splatter
I see no evil nor do I speak it
You survive by remaining speechless
Emotions numb from what I have seen
As I ponder life and what it means
To be a human being
And in this world in which I dwell
I feel so close to hell
And evil's real
I can sense its presence
Alive and omnipresent
And heaven seems so out of reach
No matter how much you try to preach
It's in this world life means little
And someone will quickly kill you
Freedom seems so far away
So there's no use to count the days
With all this time I have to kill
I feel detached from what is real
'Cause in this world behind these walls
Everyday, it's the same ol' song
Boredom is irritating
And I'm so tired of masturbating
Now, little things get on my nerves
And I only speak in four-letter verbs
I'm stressed and running low on patience
And I react to indignation
With hostile execration
'Cause in my world of prison riots
You can't get closer to death than I did
Hatred invited all this violence
And the gunner is the only one that's smilin'
Forced to ride and I hope that I don't die,
But it's so hard to survive life
In my world.

Checking Back In

Profoundness! Well, it's been a while since I've written, but here I am once again! Just to refresh memories, I began writing to, and reading "The Beat," back in 2001 when I was in "YGC" Juvenile Hall. I submitted a great deal of poetry under the moniker "Young Sneaks." I continued to write and receive "The Beat" throughout my placement. I still have every issue I ever received at home.

Well, just to bring you up to date with me, I'll start from when I was released back in 2002. Well, I was released from "Thunder Road" due to the fact that I was turning "18" and they could no longer keep me. My social worker arranged for me to move in to an independent living house in "Redwood City." That was September 2002. A whole year I was done.

Well, living on your own for the first time is very scary and can be overwhelming, especially coming straight out of incarceration, and regardless of having nowhere to turn your help, I succeeded in landing a job a couple of days after getting out, and two weeks after that, I enrolled myself into junior college. Everything seemed good. I guess that's when I got comfortable and slowly started slipping back into old habits.

A single cigarette was followed by a drink, which eventually was followed by that ever-present weed, and since I had no friends in that immediate area, I went back to what I knew best: gang banging. Soon enough, I met some "homies" and since I was a college student with a minimum wage job and a habit to support and in need of some extra cash, so of course I started selling drugs.

Then, of course, I copped a gun 'cause now it was a necessity, so here I am, sitting in class at college with a gun in my waist line and a pouch full of drugs, and the cold part about it was that I couldn't see nothing wrong with that. Then, it just all went bad after that. Exactly six months after my release and 18th birthday, I'm in Solano County jail facing "life plus eleven." Sixteen months and five lawyers later, I'm on my way to San Quentin with a "10 year bid." I just celebrated my 21st birthday in the hole.

One of the homies received a back issue of "The Beat" and upon reading it, it brought back a flood of memories and the desire to write again. I got three pieces to share. The Beat Within represents a wonderful thing to this society that seldom takes the time to just listen to the voices of its condemned. Through The Beat, we get to speak out and be heard. We get to share sides of ourselves that not too many get to see. This is how we grow.

I read a lot of good writers in "The Beat," but the one that sticks out is "Dwayne the Knowledge." I felt everything that cat wrote. His work inspired me to write, and writing helped me vent. I hope that my newest work is felt. Well guys, I guess that's pretty much it. I hope y'all like the poems. Fortitude! Lastly, I forgot to mention that I'm writing from Folsom State Prison. With pure class and style,

As The World Turns

As the world turns…
Feelings change, relationships strain,
Love blossoms, and lives are created.
Things become more complicated,
As hearts are broken and different paths are chosen.
Loved ones die and disappear,
While others get washed up
And spend their years trying to make their date.
For someone who promised she would wait,
And as the world turns,
I learned that some things don't last forever,
And though we may not always be together,
You changed me for the better,
And though some dreams outweigh a feather,
Reality is heavy and can hold us down
No matter how much we think we might be ready.
As the world keeps turning,

YOUNG SNEAKS (CONT.)

Best friends become strangers.
People grow distant.
Past lives are forgotten and no one seems to miss it.
I often talk to God, but I don't believe in religion.
I just meditate on thoughts, hoping that he'll listen,
And as the world still turns,
My mind still flows in one thousand revolutions.
New opportunities arise and our problems find solutions.
Days seem brighter than before and it's easier to smile more. Experience is put to use like mistakes aren't made twice. Yeah, that'd be nice if it were true,
But good things come with dedication.
Love is loyalty and patience,
So if you show me that you're willing
And you're still around tomorrow,
I promise I'll never abuse your feelings.

DONNY ***Writing from the SHU in Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. Donny, last name withheld, takes an idea that our very own "Rasta Man" wrote about and takes it to another level with a different perspective. He speaks of "the machine called Babylon" and as he speaks of it he reminds young people to not fall victim to it. And even in "falling," there's something to be learned. As long as we don't fall and stay down we'll be okay. And though that idea is batted around daily in an office like this, we can't help but be more interested in it when Donny talks about it. An O.G. Beat writer who never ceases to amaze us, oh, how we love introducing a writer of this magnitude…***

Bouncin' Off The Rasta Man

The Rasta man dropped knowledge. The machine called Babylon will kick you when you're down so get up. There's something called internalized hate that blows minds to pieces. The actual term is: internalized oppression. It means you believe the lies that are pumped into your mind and you become them. You feel like shhh and you hate yourself because you never feel good enough. You never measure up. They keep on saying your bad until you believe it. Don't you believe it!

See the machine don't change — it just becomes more cunning. The police will keep on busting people up, treating people raw, and getting away with murder Babylon will keep on building prison cells and if you believe that you're no good then you'll end up in one of them. It's not their job to care and they don't. They say that they care to make you care then they break your heart. And as you lay there broken they step on you and figure out how to make a profit from your misery. As that great Rastafarian said "get up — stand up — stand up for your rights/ get up — stand up — don't give up the fight!" Demand your rights to be fully human and realize your dreams, that happens by demand — demanding what's right. They don't give up nothing and their gifts have strings attached. Strings that they hang you with. Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.

Don't get me wrong — the world ain't all bad. There are wonderful people everywhere that will love you and support you. The machine is an altogether different thing that grinds you down and makes you mean. It whispers to you give up and that life don't mean a thing. Nothing can work until the machine is rejected and it's understood that you are valuable and good to have strength inside that will save you from defeat or death.

There is a responsibility in life to believe in yourself. If you don't understand that then a good way to discover yourself is to help others. It can be a little thing like helping a elder with their groceries or going to see someone in the hospital. It makes you feel good about yourself and you will begin to believe in yourself as time goes on. If you don't find yourself as time goes on. If you don't find yourself, David from Santa Cruz gives a literary example of what happens to the animals heart harden by the machine.

"'White Fang' is… the adventures of an animal — part dog, part wolf — turned vicious by cruel abuse, then transformed by the patience of one man."

-The Beat Within, Vol. 10.34, p.18.

What if that said: White Fang is the adventure of a human being, pretty good, who made mistakes — turned vicious by cruel abuse, then transformed it by patience and love. The point that I'm getting at is that the machine can make grind you up. So when it knocks you down you can get back up if you can have patience and love for yourself and transformed that negative into positive.

Unfortunately, those turned vicious by cruel abuse aren't able to see clearly that the negative can be transformed into the positive. They're caught up in the cycle of abuse. The Rasta Man makes a good point. There's nothing in defeat but the loss of self-respect. Defeat is one step in a process to be sure but we must not wallow in loss. I would suggest to the Rasta Man that he guides a healing process through his words. Create an example that reveals to our homies how to turn defeat into victory. I believe in all my people from the Bay Area, and our youth all over the place, and I believe that Rasta Man has the skills to heal and light the way to a hopeful mindset.

For around 30 years our youth have been given negative messages and outright lies. Materialism and advertising have filled our youngsters head with bling without meaning, not every one can afford bling and that don't mean a thing. The problem is these people feeling lost and empty when their lives don't play out like a song on a video. Turn the T.V. off and see the real world. A world where how you feel is important and how you treat one another is what life is about for us all.

The future generation of adults, you are going to have to educate yourselves by using the tools at your fingertips wisely. There are all kinds of guides out there that will show you exactly what the machine is up to, the machine will kill you or toss you away in a prison cell forever if you don't flip the script. The machine don't care. Have patience for each other and help each other grow. It's a hard knock life but there is dignity no matter where you are. Don't let no one get you down and when you fall get back up and step on. It's all right to fall, just don't stay down, you are stronger than you know.

The one sure thing that I know is this: you have to read and listen to knowledge wherever it is. That takes time but take it easy and open your mind and it will flow, sometimes it comes in little bits — sometimes in bigger sections, it will be different for everyone so don't get discouraged. To say a played out phrase: it's all good. I am 45 and I've done 28 years in adult prison and 99 percent of that in still a solitary confinement prison. There was a time where I let it all beat me down and I gave up and was a totally sprung fighter. I was blasting everything hard. I have no father and we come from the struggle of a single mom raising us. Welfare, addiction, and crime, I grew up in juvenile hall and camps and on my 18th birthday went on remand to the max unit of the county jail and was soon in the adult prison.

Now I'm down for life in SHU. So I've been there. The most important thing that I can tell you is what the Rasta Man was talking about: don't let no one beat you spirit down. Don't give up. Stay up Bay Area and beyond, don't give up on The Beat Within Rasta Man, Babylon wasn't built in a day!

This is my plea to you, the youth who will one day lead this great country, to always listen with open ears, see with open eyes, and feel with an open heart. Always research the facts for yourself and make up your own mind. Be willing to reach a compromise, keeping in mind that what you need is not always what you want. You are the future.

check out the rest of Ray Sanchez's BWO page 48